

The Nation.

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EDITORIAL

YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM

Dear Abby:

I'm angling for my boss's job. No, I'm not one of those corporate backstabbers. I intend to be elected fair and square by the stockholders—I mean, voters. But I've got a problem: My boss is very popular, and I don't want to be too critical of him. So I've got to show I'm my own man without seeming disloyal. At the same time, I don't want to take the rap for some of the things that have gone on during his Administration. Now, when somebody asks me where I was when this or that took place, I tell them I didn't know about it or it wasn't my department. But if I keep saying that, people will think I've been on an eight-year lunch break.

Georgie Porgie

Dear Georgie Porgie:

Funny, your letter reminds me of one I got back in 1984 from a fellow who called himself Minnesota Fritz. I'll tell you what I told Fritz: You've got to stand up for what you believe, if anything. Nobody likes a wimp—or the word that rhymes with it and is applied to people who spend their time promoting the talents of others. The first thing you should do is show that you have some ideas of your own. (Incidentally, do you?) But that could cause another difficulty: If you have good ideas, why didn't your boss try any of them? Were you too chicken to push them?

Georgie, you have a major, major problem. I'm sending you a copy of my booklet, "How to Blow Your Own Horn Without Blowing Your Job." In your case, though, more drastic measures are called for. Maybe you should get a face lift and change your name. Or announce that while you were being held hostage by the Hezbollah, another man assumed your identity. And remember: The farther you distance yourself from someone, the more people will wonder what you were doing so close to him.

THE NATIONAL
SECURITY STATE
Gore Vidal

CALIFORNIA'S
PROP 71 VOTE
Peter Schrag

PROP 65 GOES
TO MARKET
Dick Russell

LEVITTOWN
AMERICA
Michael
Schudson

THE LAND OF
AMOS OZ
Elizabeth
Pochoda

SPIKE LEE &
BLACK WOMEN
Michele Wallace

GOOD MORNING VIETNAM

REPUBLICAN OVERTURES TO HANOI

GEORGE BLACK

The disintegration of the Reagan Administration can be measured by its more rococo public symptoms—the Noriega affair, Nancy's astrologer, Edwin Meese. But there are smaller barometers, too, seen for the most part only by specialists. In that second category, nothing epitomizes the fatuousness of late Reaganism better than the State Department's inexplicable delay in granting a visa to the Vietnamese economist Nguyen Xuan Oanh. This is not just another routine McCarran-Walter Act instance of hostility on ideological grounds. For Oanh is the architect and apostle of the program of economic liberalization that is now under way in Vietnam. The State Department's blunder was all the more troubling because it came on the eve of the Moscow summit, which could open the way to resolving the continuing conflict in Cambodia.

Oanh is hardly an unfamiliar figure in the United States: Educated at Harvard, he was a governor of the former Bank of South Vietnam; since his long stay in this country, from 1950 to 1963, many of his American colleagues and friends know him affectionately as "Jack Owen." Oanh was the brains behind the establishment last year of the Industrial and Trade Bank in Ho Chi Minh City—the first private bank permitted in Vietnam since the fall of Saigon in 1975—and one of the principal drafters of the country's new law on foreign investment, passed in January. Shortly before his planned visit to the United States, he had been on a five-country trip to solicit investors from Thailand, Singapore, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea.

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LETTERS.

'HISTORIC' DISTORTIONS

New York City

The insert you ran in *The Nation* of February 13 comparing Israel to South Africa [see page 194 of Micah L. Sifry's "After the 'Iron Fist'—What?"] was not only factually incorrect but, I believe, harmful to the aims of peace activists—both Jewish and Palestinian. This type of simplistic analogy especially undermines those Israelis and Americans who are trying to work for a just resolution to the Middle East conflict.

As anguished as we all are by the events in Israel in the past several months, the current situation must be placed in the proper framework. The historical contexts of Israel and South Africa are radically different. Israel has been in a constant state of war, not of its own making, with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab states. This is completely different from South Africa, where blacks are innocent victims and there is no state of war.

Space constraints disallow me to go through a thorough analysis of the issues raised by your article, but let me point out that in Israel today the leader of the Labor Party, Shimon Peres, representing half the nation, is calling for concessions in exchange for peace, whereas in South Africa the white electorate just conceded more power to an extremist party.

If the aim of *The Nation* is to strengthen the hand of those in Israel who seek peace with justice for Jews and Arabs, let me suggest that historic distortions contained in the insert don't assist that effort. *Jack Sheinkman*

SIFRY REPLIES

New York City

I agree with Jack Sheinkman that simplistic analogies are harmful and ought to be avoided. Israel does not equal South Africa. Zionism does not equal apartheid. But when a minority rules by force over an unwilling majority, as Israel has been doing for the past twenty-one years in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the means of repression (described in the box "insert") begin to look strikingly similar. For example, since my article was written, the number of Palestinians in administrative detention has soared to 1,700 according to the Israeli Army—or one out of every thousand, about the same proportion as that of blacks currently detained in South Africa. The numbers should be galvanizing enough, without any need to make reference to other repressive regimes. But there is a tendency to make excuses when it comes to Israel. Sheinkman sees hope in Labor's flexibility, but what does it mean to praise the party whose number-two man calls for "force, might, beatings"? Until Peres says he is willing to recognize the Palestinians' chosen representatives, we should, at minimum, withhold our applause. *Micah L. Sifry*

EARLY BLINDNESS, LATER INSIGHT

Konstanz, West Germany

In Jon Wiener's article ["Deconstructing de Man," Jan. 9], my name was linked with the Paul de Man case in a grossly misleading manner. My wartime activities and his implied knowledge thereof were cited as evidence for the allegation that de Man had maintained his ideological loyalty to Nazi principles even very late in his career. De Man, declares Wiener, "wrote about Jauss in *Blindness and Insight* and brought Jauss to Yale as a guest lecturer in the mid-1970s; Jauss is now known to have served in the S.S." By this statement I am not only turned into a witness against de Man; I am also tacitly accused of having been and perhaps still being a Nazi. The reader cannot avoid the impression that I, like de Man, had good reason to forget or cover up my activities during World War II. I cannot speak for the de Man case, but I can say some things about my own life.

I have never tried to hide the fact that I joined the Waffen-S.S. when I was 17 years old and that I served without interruption from 1939 until 1945 as a soldier, primarily on the Eastern Front. At the end of the war, I held the rank of captain in the reserve. I was neither a professional soldier nor a member of the General S.S. (infamous for its brutality), nor a member of the Nazi Party. At no time did I serve in a Waffen-S.S. unit when it committed atrocities, although there were other times when atrocities were committed by Waffen-S.S. units of which I had been or was to be a member. Also, I never made public statements in support of Nazi ideology. A tribunal under American auspices formally declared in 1948 that it could find no incriminating evidence against me. False rumors about my alleged wartime activities (during 1944), disseminated some years later in the United States, were established to be without basis by the American Berlin Document Center. Its officials apologized to me for that mistake, in a letter of June 9, 1987. I was informed that I had been misidentified with a Jauss who lived in Berlin during the war and who held the rank of Hauptsturmführer (S.S. commander) as early as 1941. That is all there is to the "Jauss case." There was nothing, and there is nothing, that I have to cover up.

But although I feel that I have nothing to hide, I do have much to regret and feel ashamed of. I deeply regret my involvement with an organization that was responsible for so much suffering and such unspeakable crimes. It does not console me that I was not fully aware of such events until after the end of the war, for during the war I failed to investigate disturbing rumors and reports or to think through their implications.

My friendship with Paul de Man, whom

I got to know at a colloquium at Zurich University in 1968, was not based on any kind of ideological sympathy but on our mutual interest in our work as scholars and theoreticians. Such professional friendship was sustained despite our profound disagreements about methodological approaches to the interpretation of literary texts. De Man's former sympathy with and advocacy of Nazi ideology was as unknown to me as—I imagine—my former service in the Waffen-S.S. was to him. When I heard that he had suppressed his early, pro-Nazi writings, I was as shocked and dismayed as all of my colleagues. It is not my place to judge Paul de Man, but I would like to end this letter with the hope that his work may be strong enough to outlast the debate about its ill-fated author. *Hans Robert Jauss*

WIENER REPLIES

Irvine, Calif.

Hans Robert Jauss may not have hidden the facts of his S.S. past, but those facts remained unknown to most of his colleagues and students in Germany as well as the United States until 1986, when he was visiting Princeton University. Faculty members there obtained and made public for the first time documentation of his wartime activities; in the ensuing scandal, the Modern Language Association canceled its plans to make Jauss an honorary member. The de Man revelations recalled this 1986 scandal.

Jauss has chosen his words carefully: He states that he was not "fully" aware of the Holocaust until after the war—but then, who was? As an officer in the Waffen-S.S., known for its ideological commitment to Hitler and military ferocity on the Eastern Front, he knew a great deal more about the Nazi campaign of extermination than most of the rest of the world.

Jauss writes that "false rumors" about his S.S. past were "disseminated"; he is referring to the 1986 Princeton scandal. But the only false report was contained in a single German document that placed him in Berlin during the war. My article said nothing about this document. Jauss acknowledges the truth of the rest of the case made at Princeton in 1986.

Why didn't the news of Jauss's S.S. past come out when he was a visiting professor at Yale in 1976? If Jauss "never tried to hide the fact" of his S.S. past, did his Yale hosts, including Paul de Man, know about it? If de Man knew, why didn't he make that information public? To raise these questions is not to suggest that de Man had an "ideological sympathy" for Jauss's wartime activities. It is to suggest that de Man might have had sympathy for Jauss's silence, since de Man at that time was concealing his own pro-Nazi past. Perhaps de Man's 1976 colleagues can help answer these questions. *Jon Wiener*

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EDITORIALS.

Nicotine Fit

THE stars have been all wrong for the tobacco industry in recent months. There has even been a modest crackdown on the nation's number-one killer drug. We're not referring only to such highly visible-in-the-media steps as the smoking ban on flights of two hours or less and the inauguration of New York City's antismoking ordinance, one of the toughest in the nation. More important are the revelations of corporate conspiracy in the Cipollone trial, in which three tobacco companies are being sued for causing the death of Rose Cipollone by can-

cer, and in the Surgeon General's latest report declaring that nicotine is an addictive drug.

These events, taken together, have produced a shift in the way that smoking is framed as a public health issue. Gradually, but perceptibly, the image of the tobacco companies is changing from rugged corporate citizens defending good old American libertarian values to that of an international drug cartel that maximizes its profits as callously as do the drug czars in Latin America. Concomitantly, smoking itself is beginning to be regarded less as a matter of "each to his own poison" than as a particularly lethal form of drug addiction. Amid all the media hubbub about the conviction of Colombian coke dealer Carlos Lehder Rivas, the politically

motivated outcry against dropping the indictments against Panama's Gen. Manuel Noriega in return for his taking a sabbatical, and the Coast Guard's comic-opera Zero Tolerance program, Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's announcement that nicotine is every bit as addictive as cocaine or heroin acquired added reverberations and feedback. Who runs the worse criminal enterprise — the Medellín cartel or the Dukes of Durham?

In that last regard, striking proof that the tobacco barons are quite aware that they are pushing a drug surfaced in the Cipollone trial. A confidential report titled "Motives and Incentives in Cigarette Smoking," prepared in 1972 by the Philip Morris Research Center of Richmond, Virginia, contains the following description:

The cigarette should be conceived not as a product but as a package. The product is nicotine. . . . Think of the cigarette as a dispenser for a dose unit of nicotine. . . . Think of a puff of smoke as the vehicle of nicotine. . . . Smoke is beyond question the most optimized vehicle of nicotine and the cigarette the most optimized dispenser of smoke.

In its day the cigarette was as ingenious an invention — in terms of hooking people — as crack is in ours. The secret of both is that they deliver a cheap, quick hit of pleasure (a much tinier one in the case of the cigarette) via inhalation into the lungs, which motivates people to want to repeat the dose. Experiments have shown that smokers develop tolerance to nicotine, as they do to cocaine or heroin, and that they experience physical withdrawal symptoms upon abrupt cessation of their daily dose. In one experiment, intravenous injections of nicotine were rated as euphoric as those of amphetamines, cocaine and morphine.

The initial effect of the Surgeon General's report may be a

AWARDS/[UNCENSORED]

Jack Newfield's article "Mayor Daley Is Alive and Well in N.Y.C.," which appeared in these pages April 4, 1987, won first prize for news analysis in a competition sponsored by the Society of the Silurians. And while we're at it, we would like to mention that Katha Pollitt's article, "The Strange Case of Baby M," published here on May 23, 1987, was nominated for a National Magazine Award.

Project Censored's list of the most underreported news stories of the year has become an annual checklist for the press. A panel of judges selected by Sonoma State University in California, which funds the project, cited *The Nation* for publishing six articles that fell among the ten categories of most-neglected topics of the year. They are:

"How the Drug Czar Got Away," by Martin A. Lee (September 5); "History Deleted," editorial (May 23); "The Export of U.S. Toxic Wastes," by Andrew Porterfield and David Weir (October 3); "After the Press Bus Left" (February 21) and "The Press and the Plan" (November 14), both items in Alexander Cockburn's column, "Beat the Devil"; and "The Space Probe's Lethal Cargo," by Karl Grossman (January 23, 1988).

flutter of sympathy for people with a Marlboro monkey on their back, but it should, over the long run, serve to buttress legislation regulating the sale of tobacco, particularly to minors — not to mention stepped-up educational efforts aimed at deterring people from getting hooked in the first place. We can also expect support for legislative efforts like Representative Thomas Luken's bill to end the Federal preemption of state product liability claims, thus enabling the states to make cigarette warning labels more cogent than they are now. Beyond our borders, Third World nations, which the tobacco industry has targetted with huge advertising campaigns, should take note of the furor here and begin to resist efforts to make them a dumping ground for surplus American weeds. The Canadian government is pushing for a total ban on cigarette advertising and promotions, and a requirement that each pack contain a printed insert listing the dangers of smoking and the various chemical byproducts in cigarette smoke. Here in America, local communities — particularly the ghettos, where pretty female pushers hand out free samples to youths in playgrounds and tobacco companies sponsor cultural events to enhance the "cool" image of smoking and give their brands an ethnic or gender-specific spin — are realizing that they are the objects of a grand marketing strategy to increase profits by addicting society's most vulnerable segments.

America won't kick the habit in a week or a year, but we are witnessing the beginning of a major turnaround.

Cold War Shrine

What with *glasnost*, *perestroika*, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and the fourth superpower summit in three years, one might think the hitherto unthinkable: that the cold war could, in the not-too-distant future, be consigned to the trash compactor of history.

But not, apparently, if Interior Secretary Donald Hodel has anything to say about it. Rejecting the opinion of an advisory committee, he has granted landmark status to the Maryland farm of Whittaker Chambers, site of the famous pumpkin from which Chambers extracted films of State Department documents allegedly given him by Alger Hiss — the "pumpkin papers."

The advisory board of the National Park Service opposed the designation, citing a guideline stating that fifty years shall elapse before landmark status be conferred. Only four decades have passed since Chambers pulled off his pumpkin caper. The reason for the waiting period is to give historians time to assess objectively the importance of the events or personages commemorated.

Hodel was unimpressed. "I appreciate that the board disagrees, but I do not choose to follow its advice in this instance," he explained (as in Ring Lardner's famous line, "Shut up," he explained").

Can it be that Hodel's unseemly haste to praise Chambers rather than to bury him was dictated by — perish the thought — ideological considerations? That his bizarre decision was an effort to memorialize one of the most apocalyp-

tic symbols of the cold war before that contest vanishes from the public view? Or before some new evidence surfaces that might cast further doubt on the provenance of Chambers's pumpkin and its contents?

Meanwhile, Alger Hiss continues, thus far with only intermittent success, his dogged attempts to obtain and fill in missing parts of the record in the case that upended his life. For a more credible view of Chambers, who had trouble distinguishing fact from fiction, readers are referred to the latest installment in this ongoing case — Hiss's new volume of impressions, *Recollections of a Life*, quietly published around the time Hodel was deciding to ignore his department's guidelines and the Soviet Union was granting landmark status to the *dacha* of the best-known dissident of the Stalinist era, Boris Pasternak.

Warts and All

Budapest

“We knew that Janos Kadar's days were numbered when, after thirty years, he finally got a nickname,” says a leading Hungarian dissident. “A year before the fall of Rakosi in July 1956, everybody started calling him ‘Borzas,’ or ‘the disheveled one’; and now for months, people at all levels, even in the party, have been referring to Kadar as ‘Rücksös,’ ‘the one with warts.’”

When the first national conference of Hungary's Socialist Workers' Party since 1957 came to an end on May 22, after a weekend of debate and “self-criticism,” Kadar — the country's maximum leader since Soviet tanks brought him to power thirty-two years ago after the crushing of the “little October” revolution led by Imre Nagy — found himself, at 76, not only stripped of his post of party General Secretary but also evicted from the Politburo.

Hungary has been seething with discontent ever since the party leadership admitted its inability to solve the country's economic crisis a year and a half ago. This past winter 5 percent of the party's national membership resigned (10 percent in the Budapest party organization, where intellectuals are more numerous). The official Communist trade union, SZOT, lost at least 6 percent of its membership in January at dues-paying time, while the Young Communists, the KISZ, saw their numbers drop by 12 percent in just one year.

This hemorrhage of party cadres was accompanied by the mushroom growth of dissident clubs and organizations, which culminated at the end of April in the founding of the Network of Free Initiatives, the first national organization to challenge openly the party's political hegemony. An appeal signed by forty-six luminaries of the independent opposition — among them the philosopher Gaspar Miklos Tamas; the writers George Konrad and Miklos Haraszti; Miklos Vasarhelyi, a veteran of the 1956 generation and the last living survivor of the trial that sent Imre Nagy to the executioner; and Janos Kis, the democratic opposition's leading theoretician — prompted a varied group of more than 200 activists to meet in a workers' restaurant here in Budapest and elect a national coordinating council representing most of the various oppositionist tendencies, including ecologists,

Christian laity, radicals and Social Democrats and the newly formed Democratic Youth Movement (FIDESZ). The latter, only a month old but already a thousand members strong, has not been recognized by the party for posing too direct a challenge to the declining Young Communists.

Kadar's downfall, however, was provoked not by any actions of the democratic opposition but by massive discontent within the Communists' ranks; resolutions were passed in party organizations all over the country in the weeks and the months before the conference, calling for changes in leadership at all levels. But “the one with warts” made a major mistake when, on April 9, he commanded the expulsion from the party of a reformist member of Parliament, Zoltan Kiraly, and three other intellectuals for having expressed their critical views outside of party circles. The result was the total disillusionment of the party's educated and technical classes. By the time of the conference — meeting under the gun of a threatened wildcat strike by railway workers and bus drivers here that would have paralyzed the economy — the decision had already been taken: To preserve the party's power, Kadar must go.

Succeeding Kadar as General Secretary is Karoly Grosz, 57, who remains Prime Minister, a post he assumed in June of last year. Much will be made in the Western press of the presence in the newly restructured Politburo of Imre Pozsgay, 54, nominal leader of the party's reformist intellectuals, and of Rezso Nyers, 65, a party economist who held posts under both Nagy and Kadar and who went public in March with his criticism of the party's economic management. However, “Pozsgay is a well-meaning but weak figure, who represents a fig leaf of appeasement to the educated,” warns the democratic opposition's most charismatic figure, Laszlo Rajk, who bears the same name as his father. (Rajk *père*, the World War II Communist resistance leader and reformist, was betrayed by Kadar and executed by the Stalinists after a famous show trial in 1949.) “As to Grosz, he is no Gorbachev — he doesn't have the stature. He's just an apparatchik who has known how to survive and maneuver.”

The real power remains in the hands of the hard-core veterans who retain a majority in the Politburo under the leadership of Janos Berecz, who keeps his post as the party's propaganda and ideological chief and who, together with Interior Minister Istvan Horvath (head of the country's considerable police bureaucracy), will make sure that the reforms promised by Grosz never threaten the apparat's control.

It is doubtful that the new regime can move fast enough to heal the ailing economy and thus anesthetize the growing working-class discontent. Laszlo Rajk is not alone among opposition leaders in predicting a “hot summer” of worker protests. This eventuality could provoke a Polish-style coup by party conservatives anxious to preserve their privileges, and in that event it is probably Interior Minister Horvath who would emerge as the Hungarian Jaruzelski.

As to the democratic opposition, admits the *Samizdat* publisher Gabor Demszky, “We are still very isolated. The government is afraid of us, but the masses don't even know that we exist.”

DOUG IRELAND

Doug Ireland is a columnist for The New York Observer.

BEAT THE DEVIL.

Lenin, Thou Shouldst, etc.

"First they'll invite us to sit on joint committees on U.S.-Soviet relations. Then they'll ask us to come to conferences at the Kennedy School. Soon we'll be appearing on joint panel shows and sending an official delegation to the Oscar awards. Before you can say 'peace and friendship' the Soviet revolution, along with principles of proletarian internationalism, will be dropping into the outstretched hand of U.S. imperialism like ripe fruit."

This was Lenin, of course, in a hitherto unpublished part of his last Testament, warning against what he called "détenteniks," described pithily as "obsessed with the United States and ready to sell out world revolution anytime for the sake of a cocktail party at the Council on Foreign Relations."

What would Lenin have made of something called the American Committee on U.S.-Soviet Relations, whose "bilateral" study was brought into the world at the start of May through the offices of the P.R. firm of Ogilvy and Mather? Decorated with such names as William Colby, George Ball, Georgi Arbatov, Valentin Falin and Fedor Burlatsky, and run on its American end by a former C.I.A. hand called Arthur Macy Cox, the committee has added its own truckload to the vast tip of rhetorical slurry overhanging the summit in Moscow.

Now such committees or commissions mostly provide an excuse for pleasant conferences in fine hotels, where the participants can pursue clandestine love affairs or three-star restaurants as fancy takes them. When the hour to issue the final report is at hand, some hack stays up all night to draft boilerplate of the kind richly represented in the summation of the American Committee, which thought long and hard before deciding that the concept of military superiority is a "suicidal illusion." Though "each side, fearing the hostile intentions of the other, continues to increase and modernize both its nuclear and conventional military forces."

This childish view of the wellsprings of the arms race, awash with moral and political equivalence, is fairly typical, as is the elephantine trumpeting of the obvious: "Through miscalculation or mechanical error, both socialism and capitalism could disappear into the ashes of an unintended nuclear exchange." But far more disturbing is the fact that Arbatov and the other Soviet détente-niks had no visible misgivings in signing on to the following conclusion:

The study's recommendation to de-militarize U.S.-Soviet competition in the Third World would require agreement (1) not to intervene directly or indirectly with military force; (2) not to introduce proxy or volunteer military forces or covert paramilitary forces into regional conflicts; (3) not to transfer a specified list of sophisticated weapons, and to influence other arms suppliers to adopt the same policy; and (4) limiting the number of military advisers or trainers sent to Third World countries to a specific small number.

Under such rules of conduct invaluable Soviet support for the Angolan revolution would be regarded as illegitimate, as probably would similar Soviet efforts to defend the revolutions in Vietnam and Nicaragua (even though in the latter

case the arms have not been sophisticated and the advisers have been few). The Soviet members of the committee were not simply on an idiosyncratic bender of their own, lulled by the executor of the Phoenix program. A gloating story in *The Washington Times* for May 19 announced that in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* the head of Moscow's Institute for Socialist World Economics, a fellow named Vyacheslav Dashichev, has blamed the crisis in U.S.-Soviet relations in the late 1970s on the invasion of Afghanistan, the creation of Soviet client states in Africa and Moscow's military buildup. I wonder how Dashichev explains the formation of the Committee on the Present Danger in 1976 or the C.I.A.'s Team B report sponsored by George Bush in the same year.

Dashichev was pissing on "the miscalculations and incompetent approach of the Brezhnev leadership," not a risky venture these days in Moscow. So much for Leonid, who did after all preside over the consolidation of the Soviet Union as a modern industrial state and, relatively speaking, a golden age for the Soviet working class, aside from sponsoring the exemplary acts of proletarian internationalism of the sort now rotted by Dashichev or another Gorby man, Yevgeny Primakov, quoted by Jeff Trimble in the *San Francisco Chronicle* for May 11 as saying, "The exclusion of the export of revolution is an imperative in the nuclear century." What about the support of revolution?

I'm all for *glasnost* and *perestroika*—at least as articulated to me in Moscow last November by Boris Kagarlitsky—but on the international side Gorby's alleged intimates and advisers, Arbatov and Burlatsky and the others, are becoming singularly unimpressive, mostly because they, like their boss, seem resolved to see the world in entirely bipolar terms, with the ancillary goal of saying or doing absolutely nothing to upset the Atlantic powers, or to deny themselves an honorary doctorate at Tufts some time in the near future.

Is this where it is all going to end, the heritage of October, the tradition of Tukachevsky and Dimitrov, with bilateral commissions adorned by a former chief of the C.I.A. and the head of Novosti, jointly denouncing "adventurism"? It's enough to make one sympathize with another Leonid, one of the Russians withdrawing from Afghanistan, quoted by Michael Parks in the *Los Angeles Times* for May 16 as saying, "I'm really afraid that the Afghans will start to fight even more fiercely among themselves now and that the bloodshed will be tremendous. . . . Mine may not be a popular opinion back in Moscow, but I think we did a great deal here for the Afghan people. . . . They have come to depend on us as they build socialism, and now we are getting out, largely for our own reasons, and leaving them to face a situation even more difficult and complex than that in 1979. Is that fair?"

Dial Zzzz for Summit

Another thing Gorby might do, apart from asking Raisa Maximovna to give Arbatov and the others a quick refresher course in Lenin's thought, is brisk up his own conversational style. I once called him the Oprah Winfrey of the international

ALEXANDER COCKBURN

communist movement, but that may have been too kind. Those great paragraphs he comes out with, billowing like a sultan's knickers, make one yearn for the crusty apothegms of Nikita K.

On May 22 *The Washington Post* published, across many, many pages, what must be the most boring interview in the whole history of journalism. On one side of the table was General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and on the other Chairman Katharine Graham, flanked by a horde of subordinates from *Newsweek* and *The Post*.

No doubt the sense of triumph consequent upon finally securing an interview with the General Secretary obscured the infinite tedium of his responses (as well as the crushing predictability of the questions), but surely someone must have sensed that neither poppy nor mandragora nor all the drowsy syrups of the world could hold a candle to this sort of thing:

GRAHAM: Mr. Gorbachev, the interest in the party conference is so great, could you not perhaps, even in more general terms, discuss your hopes for this meeting, which is obviously such an important event?

GORBACHEV: I certainly think that my expectations coincide with the expectations of our whole society. First of all, we want to take stock of what has happened over these three years, to sort out the history of *perestroika*, and, of course, we want that analysis of this period to be a critical one. We want to draw lessons—perhaps that will be necessary. And based on that analysis, we may have to take some corrective measures in what we are doing in *perestroika*. But I think that the central question is the question of how to deepen this process, how to move forward with *perestroika* and make it irreversible. Therefore, the main questions at the conference will relate to deepening the economic reform and to deepening the democratization of our party and society. This is the main thing.

Really. Chairman Graham and her team were so pleased with this blather that they published a special six-page section to accommodate it, with two whole pages of direct transcript of the ninety-minute interview, plus an indirect rehash of this same transcript, plus two more pages of Gorby's written responses to written questions. These are veritable Exocets of ennui. Here's a sample written question:

The NATO leaders have announced that even with a balance in the conventional forces [if a parity of conventional forces were achieved] in Europe, nuclear forces will still need to be preserved on the Continent as a means of retaliation [would still be needed in Europe to pose an unacceptable risk for an aggressor]. If, in keeping with that position, nuclear disarmament is unacceptable for the West, should we not try to reach a joint agreement on the terms of modernization of the tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Europe? [How does this reaffirmation of the role of nuclear weapons in Europe affect your intention to rid Europe of nuclear weapons? What do you intend as your next step toward this goal, and how do you plan to address the concerns of the western allies? If denuclearization is not possible, should the two sides seek to come to a joint statement of the terms of modernizing short-range nuclear weapons stationed in Europe?]

In case you are wondering about the square parentheses, a note by *Post* editors informs such readers as have survived the preceding three pages, "In their written responses, the Soviets revised some of the questions. Where the questions differ significantly, parts of the original questions submitted by *The Post* appear in brackets." When Phil Graham talked about journalism being the "first rough draft of history," I don't think he had this in mind.

Picking Up the Pisces

As antidote to summitspeak I strongly recommend Don Regan's *For the Record*. Toward the end of the book Regan, at that time the President's chief of staff, describes the preparations for the Geneva summit. The Reagans were to be housed in the Château de Belle Rive, a residence of Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, but Nancy was informed by "friends" (it's not clear whether Quigley of the Stars was involved here) that Prince Karim Aga Khan IV had a much nicer structure down by the lake, the Maison de Saussure. It appears that this was, from both the diachronic and synchronic aspects, a pretty nice place for a langorous parole, and the Reagans moved in. As Regan recalls:

The Aga Khan's son, Hussein, left a note for the President asking him to feed his goldfish. Reagan did so conscientiously, but on the second morning—the day he was scheduled to meet Gorbachev for the first time—he found one of the fish dead. He wore a glum expression when I came for him that morning. I asked him why.

I've got a problem, the President said, showing me the small dead creature. The fish died.

So the big untold story of the summit was the hunt for another fish, or Pisces as Quigley would no doubt prefer to put it.

There's plenty of evidence, incidentally, to support my view, expressed here a couple of weeks ago, that the input of Nancy on the nation's business was beneficial. Regan reports that "oddly enough, it was Nancy Reagan who brought me into the process." This "process" was the formulation of economic policy, an activity from which Secretary of the Treasury Regan had previously been excluded. In the course of a phone call in which the First Lady inquired of the secretary why he had not answered a letter from a friend of her stepbrother worrying about the health of the savings and loan industry, the two fell into a discussion of the economy, and Regan told Mrs. Reagan that budgetary cuts, including defense, were necessary. "The First Lady agreed, saying that she was upset with the Defense Department and Cap Weinberger. In her opinion, Cap was greedy for funds and had no idea how this was hurting the economy." Nancy listened some more and then said that Ronnie should be hearing such talk for himself. The next day Ron called up Don, and the President and the Secretary of the Treasury—this was some time in 1982—had their first substantive talk about economic policy, which of course revolved around the usual insoluble problem of how to depose the true ruler of the country, Paul Volcker.

BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN AND JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ Death Squad Killers in America, Part I

Col. Nicolás Carranza, an organizer and leader of El Salvador's infamous death squads, is quietly living in Kentucky near his daughter, according to an informed source who requested anonymity. Carranza, head of the Salvadoran Treasury Police in the early 1980s, oversaw the government's reign of terror in which up to 800 people were killed each month. Even Thomas Pickering, U.S. Ambassador to El Salvador from 1983 to 1985, once described Carranza as a "fascist." At about that time the Salvadoran regime attempted to closet Carranza in a minor diplomatic post in West Germany, but public protest there kept Carranza out.

The North American conscience is rather more accommodating. Carranza received \$90,000 a year from the C.I.A. between 1979 and 1984. William Casey was especially solicitous of him, paying him a secret visit while in El Salvador in mid-1983. The State Department has a policy of reviewing the visa applications of foreign nationals who are barred entry for the "personal advocacy of violence." According to one department official, Carranza's case was never reviewed. Thus he arrived unnoticed in Kentucky and is now free to enjoy his \$84,000 salary as an officer, still on active duty, in the Salvadoran armed forces.

■ Death Squad Killers in America, Part II

Did State Department officials receive an Argentine mass murderer in 1984? That's the question Senator Tom Harkin is asking in a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz. The war criminal in question is Carlos Suárez Mason, a former Argentine Army general who lives near San Francisco. The Argentine government has conclusively shown that Suárez Mason was responsible for the disappearance and murder of some 5,500 people in metropolitan Buenos Aires between 1976 and 1979. When the government began prosecuting the orchestrators of the "dirty war" in 1983, Suárez Mason fled to the United States.

The letter reveals that in giving a deposition in the extradition case against him, Suárez Mason's wife let slip that the general met with Administration officials in the State Department in June of 1984. Harkin says that Suárez Mason's lawyers made the same claim in a bail hearing. Shultz has not yet responded to the Senator's query, but early speculation about Suárez Mason's host focuses on—who else?—Elliott Abrams.

■ The Haitian Divorce

As soon as Leslie Manigat was inaugurated President of Haiti, in February, a high-powered consulting firm was ready to sing his praises in Washington—for a mere \$900,000. The firm, Miner, Fraser & Gabriel Public Affairs, sent Manigat a "preliminary assessment," which stated:

To be blunt, we detect an overwhelming belief . . . that the most recent election was subject to widespread rigging, fraudulent balloting, candidate and voter intimidation and boycotts. . . . whether this perception squares with reality is, frankly, not the issue. What matters is that—unless dealt

with properly and quickly—it could have a devastating "chilling effect" upon every aspect of your Administration's dealings with . . . key American audiences.

The solution, the firm suggested, is to "'decouple' the election issue from the Manigat issue": put simply, to wipe out the memory that Manigat won a discredited election following a period of military-supported violence.

The firm has experience handling clients with such problems. In 1986 it had a contract with Carl (Spitz) Channell to lobby for the White House's \$100 million military aid request for the *contras*. The company's head, Thomas Miner, is a longtime acquaintance of Manigat and, apparently, the C.I.A. In his *CIA Diary*, Philip Agee maintained that Miner's own Chicago P.R. firm provided a C.I.A. agent with a cover in Uruguay in the 1970s. Asked if he has ever had any relationship with the Company, Miner refused to comment.

In soliciting Manigat, the firm offered to package him as "independent of control" by the Haitian military and devoted to free enterprise; such credentials are necessary if he hopes to obtain U.S. aid, which Haiti was denied last year. Manigat finally signed a contract with the firm, though it is unclear what he agreed to pay. But in April, after the deal got some notice here and in Haiti, Manigat's top adviser squashed it. That hasn't stopped Miner, Fraser & Gabriel. It is "still trying to harvest Haiti" by pitching new proposals, says a Haitian official. Senior vice president J. Peter Segall would not say whether the firm was attempting to win back its Haiti contract.

■ The War on the Wall

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is under siege. On May 11 a Senate committee, in a fit of misguided politicking, approved a bill that would place a statue of Vietnam-era nurses on the grounds of the memorial. The measure is based on the premise that nurses not killed in Vietnam are somehow slighted by Maya Lin's austere and beautiful design. An amendment to the bill stresses that the nurses will be the last addition to the memorial, but because Congressional sponsors of the new statue are treating the memorial as a Christmas tree on which every constituency gets its own ornament, that amendment is probably meaningless. Air Force pilots, Navy seamen and American Indians have already begun clamoring for their own statues. The most immediate threat, however, is from the crew of artistic Rambos that tried to block the memorial in the first place, calling it a "wall of shame." That artistic judgment has been overwhelmingly rejected by Americans. The memorial's power to provoke personal contemplation, not propagandistic response, has made it the most popular monument in Washington. Robert Dornan, the crazed California Republican, has introduced a bill to place a flagpole at the vertex of the V-shaped wall—a bit of petty Reaganite revenge on the millions who like the memorial as it stands. Dornan's bill already has 235 co-sponsors.

ARTICLES.

■ THE NATIONAL SECURITY STATE

How to Take Back
Our Country

GORE VIDAL

Every now and then, usually while shaving, I realize that I have lived through nearly one-third of the history of the United States, which proves not how old I am but how young the Republic is. The American *empire*, which started officially in 1898 with our acquisition of the Philippines, came to a peak in the year 1945, while I was still part of that army which had won us the political and economic mastery of two hemispheres. If anyone had said to me then that the whole thing would be lost in my lifetime, I would have said it is not possible to lose so much so quickly without an atomic catastrophe, at least. But lose it we have.

Yet, in hindsight, I can see that our ending was implicit in our beginning. When Japan surrendered, the United States was faced with a choice: Either disarm, as we had done in the past, and enjoy the prosperity that comes from releasing so much wealth and energy to the private sector, or maintain ourselves on a full military basis, which would mean a tight control not only over our allies and such conquered provinces as West Germany, Italy and Japan but over the economic — which is to say the political — lives of the American people. As Charles E. Wilson, a businessman and politician of the day, said as early as 1944, "Instead of looking to disarmament and unpreparedness as a safeguard against war, a thoroughly discredited doctrine, let us try the opposite: full preparedness according to a continuing plan."

The accidental President, Harry Truman, bought this notion. Although Truman campaigned in 1948 as an heir to Roosevelt's New Deal, he had a "continuing plan." Henry Wallace was on to it as early as: "Yesterday, March 12, 1947, marked a turning point in American history, [for] it is not a Greek crisis that we face, it is an American crisis. Yesterday, President Truman . . . proposed, in effect, America police Russia's every border. There is no regime too reactionary for us provided it stands in Russia's expansionist path. There is no country too remote to serve as the scene of a contest which may widen until it becomes a world war." But how to impose this doctrine? The Republican leadership did not like the state to be the master of the country's economic life, while of the Democrats only a few geopoliticians, like Dean Acheson, found thrilling the prospect of a military state, to be justified in the name of a holy war against something called Communism in general and Russia in particular. The fact that the Soviet Union was no military or economic threat to us was immaterial. It must be made to

appear threatening so that the continuing plan could be set in motion in order to create that National Security State in which we have been living for the past forty years.

What is the National Security State? Well, it began, officially, with the National Security Act of 1947; it was then implemented in January 1950 when the National Security Council provided a blueprint for a new kind of country, unlike anything that the United States had ever known before. This document, known as NSC-68 for short, declassified only in 1975, committed — and still, fitfully, commits — us to the following program. First, never negotiate, ever, with Russia. This could not last forever; but the obligatory bad faith of U.S.-Soviet meetings still serves the continuing plan. Second, develop the hydrogen bomb so that when the Russians finally develop an atomic bomb, we will still not have to deal with that enemy without which the National Security State cannot exist. Third, rapidly build up conventional forces. Fourth, put through a large increase in taxes to pay for all of this. Fifth, mobilize the entire American society to fight this terrible specter of Communism. Sixth, set up a strong alliance system, directed by the United States (this became NATO). Seventh, make the people of Russia our allies, through propaganda and C.I.A. derring-do, in this holy adventure — hence the justification for all sorts of secret services that are in no way responsible to the Congress that funds them, and so are in violation of the old Constitution.*

Needless to say, the blueprint, the continuing plan, was not openly discussed at the time. But, one by one, the major political players of the two parties came around. Senator Arthur Vandenburg, a Republican, told Truman that if he really wanted all those weapons and all those high taxes to pay for them, he had better "scare the hell out of the American people." Truman obliged, with a series of speeches beginning October 23, 1947, about the Red Menace endangering France and Italy; he also instituted loyalty oaths for Federal employees; and his Attorney General, Tom Clark, published a list of dissident organizations that December. The climate of fear has been maintained more or less zealously by Truman's successors, with the brief exception of Dwight Eisenhower, who in a belated fit of conscience at the end of his presidency warned us against the military-industrial complex that had, by then, established permanent control over the state.

The cynicism of this coup d'état was breathtaking. Officially we were doing nothing but trying to preserve freedom for ourselves and our allies from a ruthless enemy that was everywhere, monolithic and all-powerful. Actually, the real enemy were those National Security Statesmen who had so

* For those interested in the details, I recommend H.R. Shapiro's *Democracy in America*, the only political history of the United States from British shires to present deficits. Needless to say, this masterly work, fourteen years in the making, is published privately by Manhattan Communications, 496 La Guardia Place, Suite 406, New York, NY 10012. The present volume is only half the whole, and lacks scholarly apparatus (index, bibliography) but not scholarship.

dexterously hijacked the country, establishing military conscription in peacetime, overthrowing governments that did not please them and, finally, keeping all but the very rich docile and jittery by imposing income taxes that theoretically went as high as 90 percent. That is quite an achievement in a country at peace.

We can date, from January 1950, the strict governmental control of our economy and the gradual erosion of our liberties, all in order to benefit the economic interest of what is never, to put it tactfully, a very large group—defense spending is money- but not labor-intensive. Fortunately, all bad things must come to an end. Our huge indebtedness has made the maintenance of the empire a nightmare; and the day Japan stops buying our Treasury bonds, the troops and the missiles will all come home to a highly restless population.

Now that I have defined the gloomy prospect, what solutions do I have? I shall make five proposals. First, limit presidential election campaigns to eight weeks. That is what most civilized countries do, and all democratic ones are obliged to do. Allow no paid political ads. We might then entice that half of the electorate that never votes to vote.

Second, the budget. The press and the politicians constantly falsify the revenue and the disbursements of the Federal government. How? By wrongly counting Social Security contributions and expenditures as a part of the Federal budget. Social Security is an independent, slightly profitable income-transferring trust fund, which should be factored out of Federal revenue and Federal spending. Why do the press and the politicians conspire to give us this distorted view of the budget? Because neither they nor their owners want the public to know how much of its tax money goes for a war that does not exist. As a result, Federal

Reserve chair Alan Greenspan could say last March, and with a straight face, that there are only two options for a serious attack on the deficit. One is to raise taxes. The other is to reduce the entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare. He did not mention the defense budget. He did not acknowledge that the so-called entitlements come from a special fund. But then, he is a disciple of Ayn Rand.

In actual fact, close to 90 percent of the disbursements of the Federal government go for what is laughingly known as "defense." This is how. In 1986 the gross revenue of the government was \$794 billion. Of that amount, \$294 billion was Social Security contributions, which should be subtracted from the money available to the National Security State. That leaves \$500 billion. Of the \$500 billion, \$286 billion went to defense; \$12 billion for foreign arms to our client states; \$8 billion to \$9 billion to energy, which means, largely, nuclear weapons; \$27 billion to veterans' benefits, the sad and constant reminder of the ongoing empire's recklessness; and, finally, \$142 billion to interest on loans that were spent, over the past forty years, to keep the National Security State at war, hot or cold. So, of 1986's \$500 billion in revenue, \$475 billion was spent on National Security business. Of that amount, we will never know how much was "kicked back" through political action committees and so-called soft money to subsidize candidates and elections. Other Federal spending, incidentally, came to \$177 billion in 1986 (guarding presidential candidates, cleaning the White House), which was about the size of the deficit, since only \$358 billion was collected in taxes.

It is obvious that if we are to avoid an economic collapse, defense spending must be drastically reduced. But it is hard to reduce a budget that the people are never told about. The first politician who realizes why those politicians who *appear* to run against the government always win could not only win election but be in a position to rid us of the National Security State—which is what people truly hate.* "Internal Improvements" was the slogan of Henry Clay's popular movement. A neo-Clayite could sweep the country if he wanted seriously to restore the internal plant of the nation rather than invade Honduras or bob expensively about the Persian Gulf or overthrow a duly elected government in Nicaragua while running drugs (admittedly, the Central Intelligence Agency's only margin of profit).

Third, as part of our general retrenchment, we should withdraw from NATO. Western Europe is richer and more populous than America. If it cannot defend itself from an enemy who seems to be falling apart even faster than we are, then there is nothing that we, proud invaders of Grenada, can effectively do. I would stop all military aid to the Middle East. This would oblige the hard-liners in Israel to make peace with the Palestinians. We have supported Israel for forty years. No other minority in the history of the United

* The press, which should know better, is of no help. The Iran/ *contra* hearings were a sudden dramatic confrontation between the real government of the United States, as represented by Ollie North et al., and the cosmetic government—Congress and the never-ending, always-issueless presidential elections. Ollie told us as much. But no one got the point.



DRAWINGS BY MONICA INCISA

States has ever extorted so much Treasury money for its Holy Land as the Israel lobby, and it has done this by making a common cause with the National Security State. Each supports the other. I would have us cease to pay for either.

Fourth, we read each day about the horrors of drug abuse, the murder of policemen, the involvement of our own government in drug running and so on. We are all aware that organized crime has never been richer nor the society more demoralized. What is the solution? I would repeal every prohibition against the sale and use of drugs, because it is these prohibitions that have caused the national corruption, not to mention most of the addiction. Since the American memory has a span of about three days, I will remind you that in 1919 alcohol was prohibited in the United States. In 1933 Prohibition was repealed because not only had organized crime expanded enormously but so had alcoholism. What did not work then does not work now. But we never learn, which is part of our national charm. Repeal would mean that there is no money for anyone in selling drugs. That's the end of the playground pusher. That's the end of organized crime, which has already diversified and is doing very nicely in banking, films and dry cleaning. Eventually, repeal would mean the end of mass drug addiction. As there will always be alcoholics, there will always be drug addicts, but not to today's extent. It will be safe to walk the streets because addicts will not rob you to pay for their habit.*

Fifth, two years ago I described in these pages how the American empire ended the day the money power shifted from New York to Tokyo and we became, for the first time in seventy-one years, a debtor nation. Since then, we have become the largest debtor country in history. I suggested a number of things that might be done, some of which I've again mentioned. But, above all, I see our economic survival inextricably bound up with that of our neighbor in the Northern Hemisphere, the Soviet Union. Some sort of economic alliance must be made between us so that together we will be able to compete with Japan and, in due course, China. As the two klutzes of the north, each unable to build a car anyone wants to drive, we deserve each other. In a speech at Mikhail Gorbachev's antinuclear forum in Moscow, I quoted a Japanese minister of trade who said that Japan would still be number one in the next century. Then, tactlessly, he said that the United States will be Japan's farm and Western Europe its boutique. A Russian got up and asked, "What did he say about us?" I said that they were not mentioned but, if they did not get their act together, they would end up as ski instructors. It is my impression that the Russians are eager to be Americans, but, thanks to the brainwashing of the National Security State's continuing plan, Americans have a built-in horror of the Evil Empire, which the press and the politicians have kept going for forty years. Happily, our National Security State is in the red, in more ways than one. Time for a change? □

* I called for the legalization of drugs pretty much in these same words on the Op-Ed page of *The New York Times* of September 26, 1970. Today more and more voices are joining mine — see, for example, *The Economist* of this April 2.

DEMONSTRATE

SATURDAY, JUNE 4, 1988

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- Stop the Killing, Beating, Imprisonment, and Expulsion of Palestinians
- Stop U.S. Funding of the Occupation

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(212) 557-5410

San Francisco:

11:30 am, U.N. Plaza
(Market Street)
(415) 861-1552

Chicago:

1:00 pm Daly Plaza
(Dearborn /Washington)
(312) 342-2986

Houston:

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CALIFORNIA'S PROP 71

Turning Point on Fiscal Austerity?

PETER SCHRAG

Sacramento, California

It's only coincidence that on June 7, ten years and a day after Californians overwhelmingly approved Proposition 13, which set a ceiling on state and local tax rates, they'll vote on California's first measure to ease the crippling pinchpenny restrictions they placed on their public services. But the connection between the two votes is significant nonetheless: Just as Proposition 13 was the loudest and most influential protest in what became known as the national tax revolt, so the balloting this month will not only determine a great deal about the public weal in California but serve as the best indication to date of whether the nation as a whole is ready to come out of the fit of miserliness in which it has floundered for the past decade.

Proposition 13, the state constitutional amendment sponsored by the self-styled tax crusaders Howard Jarvis (who died in 1986) and Paul Gann, rolled back local property taxes by some \$7 billion — roughly 20 percent of all state and local revenues at the time — and put sharp constraints on the power of the state and local governments to impose new levies. Because of it, and because of the inflexible parsimony of California's Republican Governor, George Deukmejian, the state, once among the most progressive in the nation, has slipped from fourth to twenty-fifth place in the percentage of personal income devoted to state and local taxes. Where fifteen years ago it was consistently among the leaders in education, transportation and hospitals, it now stands twenty-second in the country in per pupil spending on elementary schools, below the national average and well below most other major industrial states; fourteenth in spending for hospitals; and fifty-first, counting the District of Columbia — dead last — in per capita spending for highways, this in the state once synonymous with unabashed freeway construction.

As a consequence, California schools are now the worst in the nation in terms of class size and stand forty-seventh or forty-eighth in percentage of income devoted to public education; counties have curtailed public library hours, slashed mental health budgets, and in some instances closed public hospitals. Because of the parsimony, in some counties it's no longer possible to find a doctor who will provide prenatal care to women on Medi-Cal state aid.

The measure on this month's primary ballot, Proposition 71, will not touch Proposition 13, which is still treated as holy writ by California politicians. It would, however, ease the

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restrictions imposed by Paul Gann's Proposition 4, a constitutional amendment passed in 1979, seventeen months after Proposition 13, which allows state and local spending to increase by no more than the percentage of growth in population and inflation. In the past couple of years, Proposition 4 has proved even more damaging to the ability of cities, counties and public schools to provide services than its more famous cousin.

What makes Proposition 4, usually known simply as Gann, so restrictive is that the demands on the state's major services are growing much faster than are the general population and the cost of living. Schools are enrolling an additional 140,000 students a year—that's 10 percent growth every four years; prisons hold almost three times as many inmates, 70,000, as they did just eight years ago; highways are used, and abused, twice as heavily as they were fifteen years ago, despite the state's inability to raise gasoline taxes. Because of Gann, and because of Deukmejian's stubborn insistence on the most restrictive interpretation of its provisions, California couldn't even spend all the reduced taxes it collected last year, despite its desperate needs, and actually refunded more than \$1 billion to the taxpayers—with checks calculated to arrive just about Christmas time.

The measure now on the ballot, Proposition 71, would not abolish Gann, it would simply permit state spending to rise as fast as the growth in personal income if that is higher than inflation. Which is to say it would allow public services to expand with the state's economy rather than being ratcheted back every year. The measure is supported by State Superintendent of Public Instruction Bill Honig, by most of the state's public education establishment, by public employee unions and by many of the state's moderate civic organizations. Gann, needless to say, opposes it, and has his own competing measure on the ballot, Proposition 72, which would earmark more state general-fund money for highway construction. Under the complex formula written into Gann's new piece of monkeyshines, more and more of that highway money would come directly out of funds otherwise available for schools, welfare and hospitals. If Proposition 71 passes, it's a certain sign that Californians no longer want to be squeezed between a frozen budget and deteriorating health, housing and education. If it fails, this state will continue marching resolutely in the footsteps of Texas and Arizona.

It's hard to predict how the upcoming vote will go. But there's no question that insofar as Honig and his allies can make the issue clear to voters, it will be a test of which way California—and, to the extent that the state is a bellwether and an influence, the nation—will go. Honig had a loud and extended fight with Deukmejian over school funding last year, when per pupil spending actually declined, and so while Gann's measure could confuse things, there should be no question about what's at stake.

There is a general assumption among scholars and journalists that Proposition 13 and the tax-cut impulse in California is, as much as anything, a reflection of sharply changing demographics, from the predominantly young, up-

wardly mobile, family-oriented electorate of the 1950s and 1960s to an older, predominantly white group of voters who no longer have children in the schools (or in the parks or the libraries) and whose greatest concern in 1978 was the rising property taxes on their homes. Jarvis and Gann, a pair of elderly curmudgeons, were perfect symbols of that group.

California's elementary school population is soon to be 50 percent nonwhite. The brown and black parents of those children—many of them single parents, thus representing fewer pro-child votes—have been consistently under-represented in the electorate and lack political clout, while those who vote and are politically well represented tend to have fewer children requiring state and local public services.

Neither of those elements, however, is immutable. Nor is the let's-you-and-them-fight, zero-sum logic in which the old and young, the white and nonwhite, carry on a perpetual battle over a budget frozen in constitutional concrete. And given the fact that this year, for the first time in many elections, the California primary may make a real difference in the Democratic presidential nomination race (and that Jesse Jackson is on the ballot), a lot of those heretofore passive minority voters may show up at the polls. The signal that Jackson's electoral success has been sending about a resurgent left in America could thus be considerably amplified by the most clear-cut electoral decision yet that the privatism and escape from social responsibility of the Reagan era—an era that began in California well before the election of 1980—may be at an end. A whole generation of politicians who should know better has been held in thrall to the spell of Jarvis and Gann. It's hard to imagine how much could be done once that spell is broken. □



■ PRODUCT-WARNING LAW

Prop 65 Goes To the Market

DICK RUSSELL

EIGHTEEN months after California voters passed the nation's toughest anti-toxicants law, Proposition 65, the battle to implement it has only begun. It pits environmental lawyers and consumer groups against industries and Governor George Deukmejian, a confrontation whose outcome will have wide-ranging implications for the regulation of toxic chemicals across the country. Also known as the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, the ballot initiative was approved by 63 percent of California's voters. "The essence of Proposition 65," says Al Meyerhoff, an attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council (N.R.D.C.) in San Francisco, "is to force out of the home, workplace and environment some of the most dangerous chemicals known."

The new law took effect February 27, after providing businesses more than a year's grace period to make adjustments. In its initial phase the legislation mandates a warning for any product containing chemicals known to pose a "significant risk" of causing cancer or birth defects. This applies to consumer products, workplace exposures or industrial emissions at businesses employing ten or more people, with violators liable for fines of up to \$2,500 a day. Starting in October, no industry will be allowed to discharge any of the 200-plus listed chemicals into a current or potential source of the state's drinking water. Citizens are given the right to bring suits against polluters and receive up to 25 percent of any judgment.

Proposition 65's design, as described by one of its drafters, David Roe of the Environmental Defense Fund (E.D.F.) in Oakland, is "to put the shoe on the other foot, create an incentive for businesses to self-police." But with California and its nearly 28 million people composing the eighth-largest marketplace on the planet (and about 11 percent of the U.S. market, not to mention boasting 40 percent of America's agricultural dollar volume), the law is not something that companies will accept without a fight. "Proposition 65 is under concerted attack by some formidable opponents," says Meyerhoff, "including agribusiness interests, the oil, chemical and electrical industries, and the Governor."

During the 1986 election campaign, those foes spent almost \$5 million in an unsuccessful attempt to scuttle the initiative. They claimed that it was too vague, unfairly penalized businesses while exempting public agencies from the same scrutiny, and might even trigger a mass exodus of investment out of California. But with the help of Hollywood stars—an effort organized by State Assemblyman Tom

Hayden and his wife, Jane Fonda—the measure passed by a 2-to-1 margin. Carl Pope of the Sierra Club, co-author of the proposition, says it showed that "people have simply concluded that involuntary exposure to toxic chemicals is unacceptable, unnecessary and immoral. And they are willing to take very strong steps to make companies change their practices."

That, however, is not proving to be easy. The first effort to undermine Proposition 65 came via Republican Governor Deukmejian. While the initiative explicitly requires strict warnings and discharge regulations on some 260 carcinogens and reproductive toxins already identified by Federal and international agencies, in February 1987 Deukmejian unveiled a short list containing only twenty-nine. The Governor argued that the other chemicals had been proven to cause these health problems only in laboratory animals, not human beings. Thus, they should be considered "candidate chemicals" to be studied one by one.

Led by the A.F.L.-C.I.O., a coalition immediately took Deukmejian's plan to court. California Attorney General John Van de Kamp, a supporter of Proposition 65, announced that he would not defend the Governor's position. That April, Superior Court Judge Roger Warren found the short list legally unacceptable and granted a preliminary injunction against it, calling the Governor's reasoning "strained and tortured." Meantime, a state-appointed Science Advisory Panel has moved ahead, adding 195 more chemicals to the Governor's list of twenty-nine. By establishing risk levels for each, and regulating all chemicals that have the potential for causing cancer in one of every 100,000 people, the E.D.F.'s Roe says the initiative has forced "a tremendous acceleration from science to law. In the last twelve months, California has drawn more of these lines than the Federal government has in the past twelve years."

Indeed, the Federal government has been woefully laggard in identifying toxicants. Regulatory action under the Clean Air Act, passed in 1972, has singled out only thirteen contaminants. The Toxic Substances Control Act, intended to determine which of the 30,000 chemicals in commercial use need regulation, has nailed down only fifteen in twelve years. The Safe Drinking Water Act has led to only twenty-two enforceable standards. So, California is pioneering in identifying and regulating toxic hazards, despite the numerous ploys by industry aimed at circumventing the law.

One industry tactic to undercut Proposition 65 surfaced eleven days before businesses were required to provide "clear and reasonable" warnings on the initially listed twenty-nine chemicals in February. Rather than post notices on any products or shelves, the Grocery Manufacturer's Association came up with the idea of a toll-free number that consumers could call to ask whether a particular item was listed. When the Deukmejian administration neither endorsed nor scotched the notion, the business-sponsored Ingredient Communications Council's hot line (which environmentalists branded "800-BALONEY") was posted in 62,000 supermarkets and elsewhere across the state.

"Obviously, nobody's going to leave their shopping cart in the aisle, go outside to a pay phone and then make 15,000

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separate brand-name calls just to find out if there's something in the supermarket that needs a warning," says Roe. "This is hiding the needle in a haystack." As Tom Hayden puts it, "the law's impact is supposed to bring a more democratic workplace, where shoppers and employees can make informed choices. This '800' number is a fraud on the public; any meaningful warning must take place at the point of purchase."

Unless the situation changes soon, the San Francisco-based Consumers Union and other groups are expected to take the matter to the courts. A letter from the California Attorney General's office, stating that "a system must provide the required information to all customers, not just those willing to invest unusual amounts of time and effort to discover the facts," bolsters a communiqué sent by Hayden and others to all the state's retailers in April warning that the toll-free number fails to comply with the law.

Yet another issue in dispute is the Deukmejian administration's decision to grant a "temporary exemption" on the requirement that the food, drug and cosmetics industries issue chemical warnings, made after they argued that their products are already fully regulated by the Federal Food and Drug Administration. Although manufacturers admit that many foods contain trace amounts of lead, listed as a reproductive toxin, as well as the carcinogens benzene, chromium, arsenic and vinyl chloride, no acceptable risk levels have ever been set forth by the F.D.A. for many foods. Proposition 65's proponents expect that very few foods will actually require warning labels, but at least the public will finally know about dangerous contents. And with the relatively small number of pesticides currently on the list expected to expand over the next year, the ramifications loom large. The Environmental Protection Agency, for example, has never adequately regulated ethylene bisdithiocarbamates (EBDCs), the world's most popular fungicides, used on almost half the spinach, broccoli, tomatoes, lettuce and other leafy vegetables grown in the United States. Federal law allows products producing cancer risks as high as one in 1,000; Proposition 65 stipulates one in 100,000. Thus, warnings on California food products containing EBDCs — and another carcinogen, ethylene thioureas (ETUs), made when EBDCs are cooked — would be inevitable.

Then there are the inert ingredients in home-use chemicals, such as benzene and vinyl, whose privacy is guaranteed by provisions on corporate trade secrecy in Federal law. "Some of the inerts are among the most hazardous chemicals we know of," says the N.R.D.C.'s Meyerhoff. "There are no standards in food, they're ignored in worker protection, but Proposition 65 applies to them if we can find out what they are." As for cosmetics, very little premarket testing for toxicants has been conducted. But formaldehyde, added to the list in January, is found in significant doses in some nail polishes and shampoos.

Negotiations between environmental groups and regulatory officials seeking to lift the exemption of food, drugs and cosmetics recently broke down. A coalition of environmental and labor groups, including Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, is therefore taking the Governor to court.

Up against Proposition 65 is an industry coalition including California's Chamber of Commerce, League of Food Processors, Manufacturer's Association and Farm Bureau. Known as the Environmental Working Group ("We started immediately with a point of consensus: Whoever works on this ought to have 'environmental' in their title," quips Roe), the coalition's primary lawyer is Michele Corash, general counsel for the E.P.A. under the Carter Administration and more recently a lobbyist on toxic issues for the Chevron Corporation.

Corash insists that "clear and reasonable" warning is subjective wording, and that when a customer orders antifreeze in a gas station, for example, "a toll-free number may be the only effective way to provide the information." She maintains that the warning portion of the law obscures real problems, and that the proposition "poses great difficulties in knowing how to comply with all of it." In trying to point out that Proposition 65 is "a seriously overly stringent standard," Corash was involved in a flap last February when she told a reporter that a group of snack foods would be pulled off the market when the law took effect because they contained too much lead. After a Grocery Manufacturer's Association attorney said he'd found representatives of the Snack Food Association "surprised and astonished" about this, Corash's office claimed she'd been misquoted. But G.M.A. spokesman Peter Hutt didn't deny the thrust of Corash's revelation.

To supporters, the "mystery snack food" incident was the first example that the law was working. Shortly thereafter, the Michigan-based Celex Corporation sent a letter to the N.R.D.C. announcing that, because of Proposition 65, it was ceasing the manufacture of two herbicides that contained arsenic. After the news broke in the *Los Angeles Times*, however, Jeffrey Walker, a government



regulatory specialist with Celex, said he'd been "confused" — it wasn't the California law but Federal questions about the herbicides' safety that had inspired the change. Environmentalists suspect that pressure from other pesticide makers probably caused the firm to downplay any cause-and-effect relationship to Proposition 65. Celex is changing its ways not just in California but nationwide.

"The bottom line of product warnings is to infuse an old-fashioned free-market principle into the toxic equation," says Jim Shultz of California's Consumers Union. "Within a couple of years, you'll see companies looking for a marketing advantage, saying that their products are so clean they don't have to carry a Proposition 65 warning." Assemblyman Hayden has been meeting with business people and their laboratory analysts who, Hayden says, "have it under active consideration to change their product base."

The warning requirement has also resulted in an unusual alliance between environmentalists and retail stores. The California Retailers Association, in fact, at one point threatened a suit to force application of warning labels at the point of manufacture. "Retailers justifiably don't want to get stuck for something that's not really their responsibility," says Lucy Blake, executive director of the California League of Conservation Voters, "and certainly not for lawsuits because they haven't adequately informed people."

Admittedly, the law is not a simple one for businesses to comply with. Some of the listed chemicals are ubiquitous — benzene, for example, which besides showing up in many food products also makes up 2 percent of most gasoline as an octane-booster; or formaldehyde, widely used in the manufacture of mobile homes, furniture and even permanent-press clothing. California's new asbestos standard is 1,000 times tougher than the E.P.A.'s and, although asbestos production has markedly declined in recent years, it's still present in more than half of all commercial buildings and about 20 percent of all homes. "There's no way around it for building owners; they're going to have to notify [tenants]," says Richard Steffen, a consultant with the California State Assembly's Office of Research.

Computer chip makers must advise workers that they're being exposed to chromium, arsenic and lead. Chrome-plating shops, generally small businesses without good emission controls, must tighten up on cancer-causing hexavalent chromium. Private hospitals, which pollute the air with ethylene oxide, a sterilizing agent, must inform patients, employees and the surrounding neighborhood of it. One of the biggest antiproposition factions has been the liquor industry, since alcohol is now listed as a reproductive toxin. Indeed, alcohol is the leading preventable cause of birth defects in the nation (4,000 cases a year in California alone). Vintners fear that restaurants will have to inform pregnant women about the potential risks of urethane in their glasses.

Despite such qualms, the warnings are going up. At gas stations across the state, signs are posted reading: "Chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer, birth defects and other reproductive harm" are present in gasoline and its vapors. The Western Oil and Gas Association took out a half-page advertisement in 110 California newspapers

noting potential danger "in and around facilities that produce, refine, handle, transport, store or sell crude oil and petroleum and chemical products." And the real meat of Proposition 65 — severe limitations on what chemicals can be spewed into drinking-water sources — is yet to come. California's Water Resources Control Board has a liberal history of designating such areas, including groundwater sources that might eventually be tapped for drinking. "Beginning this fall, agriculture will have to find a way to do business that doesn't pollute these," says Meyerhoff. "It will mean much reduced use of pesticides generally, and choosing chemicals not known to be cancer-causing."

While a host of unresolved definitional and regulatory questions remain — and agribusiness and industry are being closemouthed about their eventual reaction — Pope summarizes: "Anybody who's discharging into the Sacramento or San Joaquin Rivers will probably have to stop using arsenic-containing pesticides, stop handling benzene in ways that cause it to spill into the ground, and look at things like cooling towers, where large volumes of water are going through chrome-plated metal surfaces, sending chromium, lead and other heavy metals leaching off into the rivers." Trichloroethylenes (TCEs), a type of industrial solvent, were recently listed, meaning that leaky gasoline tanks discharging them, as well as benzene and lead, toward the groundwater table will need to be cleaned up.

"Most important of all," Meyerhoff says, "citizens will now be able to bring cases against water polluters in their community, and get not only an injunction but substantial damages without any showing of physical injury. The main problem with the toxic tort system so far has been proving causation, because it's not easy to show that someone's cancer resulted from their drinking water. But Proposition 65 is not a remedial but a preventive statute, so the claim arises simply from the exposure."

The formulators of the proposition knew in 1986 that an even tougher law would have been endorsed by the voters. They decided not to include public agencies, such as municipal water and sewage systems, for fear of complicated enforcement problems. In any case, private industry is responsible for the bulk of pollution of private waters. Now, however, two bills have been introduced that would apply the same warnings and discharge prohibitions to the governmental authorities.

Proposition 65's creators have chosen to wait until the initial tumult is over before carrying their message to other states. But as toxicologist Balis Walker, former head of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and now president of the American Public Health Association, puts it, "If we see it's workable, I think it ought to be applied broadly, and I see no reason why it couldn't work." Already, according to Meyerhoff, between fifteen and twenty states have legislation or initiatives similar to Proposition 65 pending, including New York, Massachusetts, Texas, Oregon, Tennessee and Hawaii. The Sierra Club and Environmental Defense Fund plan an eventual grass-roots campaign to spread the message.

"There's general panic in this state and across the country," one regulatory expert for a national cosmetics firm has acknowledged. "If the law is successful here, other states are almost certain to follow suit." But as Tom Wariner, California's Under Secretary of Health and Welfare, recently summed it up: "There are probably people who wish the proposition had never happened. . . . [But] I think the world is a different place post-Proposition 65." □

■ DISINVESTMENT AIN'T ENOUGH

Don't Do Business With Apartheid

PIPPA GREEN

A year ago I.B.M. told its U.S. shareholders that it had withdrawn from South Africa and sold its assets to a newly formed South African company, Information Services Management. At about the same time, full-page advertisements appeared in the South African press assuring readers that disinvestment did not mean I.B.M. computers would disappear from the South African market.

Disinvestment for General Motors, which sold its South African subsidiary to its local management, has also not meant an end to marketing the Opel cars and Isuzu trucks made under G.M. license in that country. And Ford, which sold its 42 percent share in the South African Motor Corporation (Samcor) late last year, still has its nameplates on many of the cars that come off the Samcor assembly line.

But now, as the season of annual corporate meetings approaches, a group of religious-institution and pension-fund shareholders are challenging Ford, I.B.M., G.M. and eight other U.S. firms for taking a business-as-usual attitude even after they have pulled out of South Africa. These shareholders, which include the Teachers Insurance and Annuity-College Retirement Equities Fund (T.I.A.-C.R.E.F.), the largest pension fund in the United States, are calling on the corporations to end trade, licensing, franchising and correspondent banking agreements with South Africa.

More than a hundred U.S. companies still maintain non-equity business ties and distribution networks in South Africa, according to Donna Katzin, a spokeswoman for the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (I.C.C.R.), which represents the religious-institution shareholders. "There has to be a way to cut off goods and services to the South African economy; otherwise the apartheid government will lick its wounds and find adjustment strategies," she said. And a U.N. report released in April notes, "The South African economy still has unrestricted access to trans-

national corporations' products and to much of the international technology it needs."

At I.B.M.'s annual meeting in Richmond, Virginia, on April 25, Katzin and nearly 10 percent of the giant corporation's shareholders backed a proposal that the company stop all its sales and services to South Africa — twice the proportion of shareholders who supported the same move last year. At Ford's annual meeting in Detroit on May 12, a similar resolution won nearly 6 percent of the votes cast. And G.M., which held its annual meeting on May 20, had three resolutions on its proxy statement, urging the severance of business links with South Africa, all of them backed by more than 12 percent of the shareholders. Supporters of the resolutions include the New York State Retirement Fund, T.I.A.-C.R.E.F. and several religious institutions. "This is a strong coalition, and all of us are committed to seeing these companies end ties with South Africa," said Timothy Smith, executive director of the I.C.C.R. "We have got enough votes to come back next year to push the same resolutions."

The protesting shareholders say they are no longer prepared to let companies that have formally pulled out of South Africa duck the question of continued economic involvement. "In the United States most people think that I.B.M. has withdrawn from South Africa and that's the end of the issue," said James Leas, one of six employee shareholders behind the proposal. "But it's not at all true. I.B.M.'s still shipping computers into South Africa at the same rate." Leas, an electronics engineer at I.B.M.'s Richmond plant, was backed by twenty-nine religious organizations that own stock in the company.

The religious-institution shareholders are particularly concerned about I.B.M.'s, Ford's and G.M.'s continuing links in South Africa because, they argue, the companies sell components and strategic technology used to bolster the apartheid system.

An I.B.M. spokesman said its products do not go to "apartheid enforcing agencies" like the police and the military. "We have required I.S.M., the South African company which sells I.B.M. products, to follow U.S. regulations" prohibiting U.S. firms from selling to the South African government, he said.

But, says Katzin, however noble its intentions, I.B.M. cannot guarantee that its computers do not end up in the hands of the government, nor that the military will not use I.B.M. technology. Indeed, that possibility is even more likely after the recent merger between I.S.M. and another South African firm, Reunert Computers, to form Technology Systems International.

Reunert, a subsidiary of the giant South African mining and industrial corporation Barlow Rand, is affiliated with Reutech, a major military electronics contractor. Although I.B.M. says that I.S.M. and Reunert Computers will operate independently, the church-affiliated shareholder group is concerned by reports that the two will cooperate in developing software and might pool other technological resources. "I.B.M. products and technology could be made available to Reunert Computers through I.S.M., and through them be provided to Reutech and its subsidiaries involved in military

Pippa Green has written for the Weekly Mail, an opposition newspaper in South Africa, and for In These Times.

contracting," said Dick Leonard, an I.C.C.R. consultant.

Despite the U.S. sanctions, Ford and G.M. vehicles *are* sold to the South African government, including the police and military. Both Ford and G.M. have said that the components and technology in the cars produced under license in South Africa originate outside the United States and are not subject to the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986.

General Motors, which supplies components for Opel cars through its German subsidiary and for Isuzu trucks through its associate Isuzu company, had a policy not to sell to the police and military before it formally withdrew from South Africa. However, since it disinvested, the Delta Motor Corporation, which took over G.M.'s South African subsidiary, has said it will abandon the policy.

Pam Kueber, a Ford spokeswoman, said that about 20 percent of the Fords made by Samcor under license are sold to the South African government. "The government writes a blanket order and Samcor does not have the ability to refuse specific orders. If the company was to take a stand and say, 'We're not going to supply the police and military,' they'd have to refuse to supply the government at all, and that's one-fifth of the business."

The companies say that were they to withdraw licensing and franchise agreements, the South African firms would fold, leaving hundreds of black workers without jobs. "We sold our South African company to a trust created solely for the benefit of our 1,500 employees, one-fourth of whom are nonwhite," said the I.B.M. spokesman. "It would have been an empty gesture to sell them the company and then deny them the opportunity to sell I.B.M. products."

Ford's Kueber said that if the auto maker were to end the licensing agreement with Samcor, "it would cause the collapse of the company and might affect up to 100,000 workers and their dependents." The highly competitive auto market in South Africa will not accept cars without a well-known brand name, and Samcor would lose the management expertise that Ford continues to provide, she said.

Although I.B.M., G.M. and Ford have said that withdrawing from South Africa completely would harm black workers, each company has handled its black work force in distinctly different ways. Ford came to an agreement with the representative black trade union, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union (NAAWU), before it pulled out and gave the workers a 24 percent stake of the 42 percent share of Samcor that it divested — a move for which it is to be commended, Katzin says. The rest of the equity is owned by Samcor, a subsidiary of the giant mining conglomerate Anglo-American.

When G.M. announced in 1986 that it was disinvesting and selling its subsidiary to the local South African management, hundreds of black workers at its Port Elizabeth plant, fearing their jobs were in jeopardy, downed their tools and staged a sit-in at the factory. Bucking an established tradition of negotiations and consultations with the militant, representative black union, NAAWU, G.M. called in the police to evict the workers from its plant and fired 567 of them, mostly shop stewards.

Today, though, G.M. says its continued links to the former subsidiary preserve the jobs of some 3,000 workers, 60 percent of whom are black. "It's very easy to sit in the comfort and abundance of the U.S. and say that something is wrong," said George Schreck, G.M.'s manager of international public relations. "But any other course of action than the one we've taken would have been irresponsible to the workers and their 15,000 dependents."

The I.C.C.R. is not convinced by the companies' professed concern for the livelihood of black workers; G.M.'s response, in particular, said Smith, is "self-serving" because of the "savage way" in which it dealt with striking workers. I.B.M.'s argument "strains our credulity" because only about 23 percent of its South African associate's workers are black, and Ford, he says, used exactly the same arguments to oppose earlier calls for withdrawal. "The real point is that they are able to sell cars to the police and military, and I.B.M. is able to sell computers to help keep white business and the white minority government running," said Smith.

The shareholders' campaign is likely to be reinforced by a sweeping new sanctions bill currently before Congress. The bill, introduced by California Representative Ronald Dellums, not only mandates disinvestment of U.S. firms from South Africa within six months but bans virtually all trade between the United States and South Africa, including the export of U.S. goods and technology. U.S. goods are defined as any that are "the direct product of technology of United States origin" — a definition that could include G.M. components manufactured by its Isuzu associate, for instance. The bill also includes a provision obliging disinvesting companies to negotiate their withdrawal with South African workers and their representative trade unions.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee has approved the bill, which extends and strengthens most of the measures passed in the 1986 antiapartheid act. It is due to be voted on in the House within the next few weeks. Senators Alan Cranston and Ted Kennedy have introduced similar legislation in the Senate, which will be debated after the vote in the House.

Jim Cason, associate director of the New York City-based American Committee on Africa, said antiapartheid activists are "optimistic that we can get strong legislation out of the House by June." However, the bill does not have "adequate momentum in the Senate," he added. "We will just have to work harder."

There is the other pressure, too, on companies with business ties in South Africa, and that pressure is unlikely to wane, even if they have already disinvested. The City of Los Angeles, for instance, has boycotted I.B.M. computers for the past twenty months, and other cities are likely to follow suit, said Mark Fabiani, counsel to Mayor Tom Bradley.

"Those companies who have sold their assets in South Africa and think they are off the hook are in for a second think," said Katzin. "The vote at the I.B.M. shareholder meeting against sales to South Africa doubled since last year. G.M.'s vote this year was higher than ever. The bottom line is that all economic ties with South Africa must be severed." □

Hanoi

(Continued From Front Cover)

The strangest part of this whole episode was the origin of the most vocal complaints to the State Department. They came not only, as one might expect, from liberal groups like the U.S.-Indochina Reconciliation Project, the sponsor of Oanh's visit. One critic was Senator Larry Pressler, the South Dakota Republican, who had met with Oanh during a trip to Vietnam in April. In a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz, he complained: "Our policy may be designed to isolate Vietnam, but it also has the effect of isolating ourselves from firsthand information about that country."

Pressler followed up with a *New York Times* Op-Ed essay on May 23 calling for the restoration of normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam. It's almost ten years now since the last serious move in that direction. That effort by the Carter Administration came to grief when Vietnamese troops occupied Cambodia and drove out Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge in January 1979. The Reagan Administration has obstinately refused to consider renewed ties until Hanoi withdraws its forces from Cambodia and gives a full accounting of Americans missing in action. Some of the Republicans who have joined Pressler's call for a diplomatic opening have the extra credibility of being bona fide war heroes — Arizona Senator John McCain, for example, a former Navy pilot who was shot down over North Vietnam in 1967 and spent five and a half years as a prisoner of war; and Pennsylvania Representative Thomas Ridge, whose hearing impairment was aggravated by the war. Their demands have been echoed by other influential Republicans like Senators Alan Simpson and Nancy Kassebaum.

McCain and Pressler had originally set March 17 as a date for introducing joint legislation to open an American "interests section" in Hanoi. However, in an interesting vignette of how Washington's thinking on Vietnam is determined, they opted to postpone the step because, as the *Congressional Quarterly* reported, "news of Nicaragua's incursion into Honduras the day before diminished the luster of any plan to improve relations with Vietnam." Hearings are expected to be scheduled this month.

The splashiest and most impassioned of the arguments for normalization, however, was an article by John Le Boutillier in the May 1 *New York Times Magazine*. Le Boutillier is president of a group called Account for P.O.W./M.I.A.s Inc., but he is probably better remembered for his flamboyant spell as a Republican Representative from Long Island between 1981 and 1983. In those days, he was known for displaying what the *National Journal* called "a contempt not just for Democrats, but for politics and government generally, a contempt typical of derisive preppies and of the careless rich of the North Shore of whom Scott Fitzgerald wrote."

So, is he a wiser man these days? Not really. On the face of it, much of what he writes seems sensible. The most striking memory that Le Boutillier took away from a March trip to Vietnam was the continuing wretched poverty of the

place. "Indeed," he wrote, "Vietnam is so backwards that an American must wonder, 'How in the world did Vietnam ever win the war?'" To his credit, he drew the right conclusions: "The answer is simple: the North Vietnamese, despite their technical backwardness, would then, and would still, fight to the death to be independent of any outside domination — and the leaders in Washington were stupid, shortsighted and ignorant of the history and character of Southeast Asia."

From a conservative such as Le Boutillier, this has the character of a revelation around a core of heresy. He has, after all, built his reputation on keeping alive the M.I.A. fantasy. Back in 1977, the House Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia, chaired by Republican Representative Sonny Montgomery, concluded that "no Americans are still being held alive as prisoners of war in Indochina" and that "a total accounting by the Indochinese governments is not possible and should not be expected." Activists like Le Boutillier, aided by a stream of Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris movies, have come to believe otherwise, and 82 percent of respondents, according to a recent Wirthlin poll, think American prisoners are still being held in Southeast Asia.

Pressler, McCain and their supporters are motivated by more hardheaded geopolitical concerns. But they would agree with Le Boutillier that stupidity, shortsightedness and ignorance are *still* at the core of U.S. policy, and they have decided to cut loose from the wreck of Reaganism before it drags them all down. The Administration's attitude toward Vietnam has never broken free of the neuroses of the past — that "sterile mixture of spite, bitterness and guilt," Le Boutillier calls it — whose only result is a policy that "has not been worthy of a superpower" and "is bad for the United States, bad for its allies and good only for the Soviet Union."



The Administration has reacted to this barrage with a kind of aggrieved consternation. One obdurate State Department official insists, "Our policy has been to support and maintain the political isolation into which Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia has put it." Other Administration officials add that the current initiative from fellow Republicans "seriously complicates" U.S. policy in Vietnam. Pressler retorts that he is "very disappointed in the State Department for taking a very rigid line on this." And even McCain, a much more conservative figure (the successor to Barry Goldwater's Senate seat, in fact), is reluctant to blame Hanoi for the continued hostilities. "Perhaps that's Vietnam's fault, but it's hard to gauge," he says. The ideologues of the far right, meanwhile, smell the blood in the water. Kenneth Conboy, Southeast Asia analyst at the Heritage Foundation, accuses Pressler of having "swallowed the bait they gave him" on his recent visit to Vietnam.

At the heart of the matter, as Le Boutillier, McCain and Pressler all recognize, in their own ways, is the extraordinary series of changes that have taken place inside Vietnam over the past year and a half. By 1985, a decade after the end of the war, Vietnam's economy was still in a ruinous state. Heaped on top of the devastation of the conflict and the failure to secure reconstruction aid from the United States was the daunting task of integrating the spartan, agrarian regime of the North with the more prosperous, decadent South—a dilemma Hanoi had tried to resolve by "breaking the machine" of Saigon.

The Sixth Communist Party Congress of December 1986 set in motion an economic rescue mission and a restoration of waning public trust in the party. Old warhorses like Premier Pham Van Dong and Politburo member Le Duc Tho, who negotiated the Paris peace accord with Henry Kissinger, were removed. The mantle of leadership passed to Nguyen Van Linh, the first leader in half a century not to be drawn from Uncle Ho's inner circle. It was a remarkable return to grace for Linh, who had been expelled from the Politburo in disgrace in 1982 for his advocacy of market reforms. Under the rubric of "renovation," Linh has championed the introduction of private enterprise; an end to corruption and bureaucracy; greater cultural and artistic debate, as exemplified by his own regular muckraking newspaper column, "Things That Must Be Done Immediately"; and a foreign investment code that is one of the most

liberal in Asia. Vietnam (which in 1977 became the first socialist nation to join the International Monetary Fund) has asked the I.M.F. to stabilize its currency, the dong, and help it out of its "mess of exchange rates" (that's Nguyen Xuan Oanh again).

But the opening to the West is more than a matter of economics: Ill-prepared U.S. officials have been sent scurrying to confront the possibility that this week's summit in Moscow could bring progress toward resolving the apparently endless conflict in Cambodia. Although Vietnam repeatedly insists that it is prepared to withdraw all its forces from Cambodia by 1990, Washington has shown no interest in talking. It has preferred to watch the Chinese-backed Khmer Rouge bleed Hanoi's army, waiting futilely for the Vietnamese—like the Nicaraguans, the Angolans and the Mozambicans—to cry uncle. They won't. Vietnam seems willing instead to turn over a new leaf in its relations with Washington and transcend the bitterness of the war. "Vietnam wants to forget the past," Linh says, "to forget that half a million American soldiers wanted to return us to the stone age."

The Soviet Union, too, has indicated beyond reasonable doubt that it is ready to reconsider its role in Indochina. A settlement of the Cambodia conflict would remove the biggest obstacle to a rapprochement between Moscow and Beijing. At a press conference in Bangkok during his April tour of several Asian countries, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev made it clear that the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan should be regarded as a model for resolving other regional conflicts. Cambodia was obviously uppermost in his mind.

The Russians also eagerly backed the two rounds of talks last winter between Prince Norodom Sihanouk and Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Vietnamese-backed government in Phnom Penh, while senior Cambodian officials have alluded to an unprecedented political opening—even to the point of allowing Sihanouk to run in competitive elections. "If we lose in an election, it is our own fault," one member of the Cambodian central committee told *The Christian Science Monitor*. "We have made many mistakes, and it could be possible that we would end up in the opposition."

Most intriguing of all to U.S. conservatives is Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's remark in a 1986 speech in Vladivostok that "if the United States gave up its military presence, say, in the Philippines, we would not leave this step unanswered." In the Pacific region, the only possible reciprocity for the Clark Air Force and Subic Bay Navy bases would be the Soviet installations at Danang and Camranh Bay in Vietnam, which were established in the wake of the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia. That geopolitical conundrum has now been made even more complicated by the Philippine government's unexpectedly tough new line on renegotiating the U.S. bases agreement, which expires in 1991.

It's this tantalizing hint of a Soviet disengagement from Southeast Asia that really has conservatives like Le Boutillier smacking their lips. While Washington picks over old resentments and refuses to see the Linh government as a

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portent of real change in Southeast Asia (which is basically the equivalent of reacting to Soviet policy in Afghanistan as if Leonid Brezhnev were still in the Kremlin), all the Republican proponents of normalization see Linh's program of renovation as a historic shift. "The new government in Hanoi," Le Boutillier writes, "leaves the strong impression that it is eager to pull away from Soviet dominance and even to help neutralize the ever-growing Soviet military presence in Southeast Asia." Vietnam thus becomes a target of opportunity, "a chance both to coax an important nation out of the Soviet orbit and to open up a large and rapidly growing market to Western free enterprise." Le Boutillier is one of a number of conservatives who see a new era of U.S.-Soviet competition, "not on the battlefield but on the economic playing field; and American free enterprise will defeat Soviet military muscle any time." The goal here is the restoration of fading U.S. power, only by smarter means than the now-bankrupt illusionism and military adventures of the Reagan years. And the first step is to restore diplomatic relations with Hanoi.

There are, of course, myriad subtexts and ironies here. The simplest of them is the desire to register a U.S. economic recovery in Asia, to strike back before the Japanese, Taiwanese and South Korean businessmen in Oanh's Rolodex gobble up all the opportunities offered by Vietnam's new foreign investment law. Then there is a variant on the China illusion, the belief that political changes in the Asian Communist world are primarily of interest as symbolic rejections of Marxism (rather than reversions to Lenin's New Economic Policy, which Linh frequently invokes), and because they open up new markets for Western goods (a particularly delicious irony, this, when one recalls that the whole idea of the Vietnam War was to rescue the Vietnamese from the fiendish influence of Chinese Communism).

These illusions are easily disposed of. In a brisk, sensible Op-Ed piece in *The Christian Science Monitor* last December, Donald K. Emmerson of the University of Wisconsin's Center for Southeast Asian Studies ticked off the reasons: The raw materials and cheap labor offered by Vietnam are more readily available elsewhere; the quality of Vietnamese manufactured goods is too poor to compete among U.S. buyers; and Vietnamese incomes are too low to purchase U.S. goods. And in any event, whatever Vietnamese market may exist is peanuts in comparison with the markets that already exist in the capitalist countries of East and Southeast Asia, let alone the potential market of China.

The deepest and richest irony of all is that beneath the bold talk of entering new eras and shaking off the postwar hangover lies the same old fallacy, one that reaches all the way back to Ngo Dinh Diem and the mirage of the "third way." This is that an enlightened change in U.S. policy can give us leverage over Vietnam and reshape the country in our image. That's still why Vietnam is important to conservatives — because, as Le Boutillier wants to believe, it "could be the first American victory in this new superpower competition." Sweet, undying dreams.

The real argument for reopening diplomatic relations with Vietnam has nothing to do with markets or nostalgia or

the reassertion of American power in the Pacific. It is much more simple: The Vietnam War is over; an independent nation named Vietnam exists, free of U.S. control, and is an important actor on the Southeast Asian scene. That is all, and it is sufficient.

It is an argument that should be easy enough for Democrats to make. But while voices on the right clamor for leadership on the issue of Vietnam, the silence on the Democratic side is deafening. It's not even as if there is a shortage of prominent candidates among the Democrats. There's New York Representative Stephen Solarz, for one, who made an unsuccessful trip to Vietnam in December 1984. "He felt they snubbed him," says one Washington analyst who follows the issue closely. "Since then he's been bitterly anti-Vietnamese, and he's had a powerful negative impact in the House." Then there are the Democrats' own Vietnam vets, like Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts and, oh yes, Senator Albert Gore Jr. Both men were on the list of cosponsors of last year's resolution by Republican Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon to open U.S. "technical offices" in Hanoi, but neither could be described as out front on the issue. Gore in particular could find worse ways of bouncing back from his debacle in the primaries and recovering some of his tarnished credibility within the party on an issue of substance and integrity. For the moment, however, the Democrats offer only a vacuum. And that means that a new brand of right-wing nostalgia, able to masquerade as conciliation and common sense, has the field to itself. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Pumping Polyester

MICHAEL SCHUDSON

MIDDLE AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM: The Future of Liberal Democracy. By Herbert J. Gans. *The Free Press*. 208 pp. \$19.95.

It is something of a shock to discover that Herbert J. Gans is now president of the American Sociological Association. It is not so much that his doctorate is in city planning rather than sociology, or that he is a social democrat who writes for both academic and popular publications. The surprise is that someone widely known in and outside sociology as a fieldworker, a careful attender to the everyday lives of ordinary people, should be so honored. There is nothing exotic or recumbent about the work of Herbert Gans. *The Urban Villagers* (1962), a study of an Italian-American community in Boston, *The Levittowners* (1967), an examination of a middle American New Jersey suburb, and *Deciding What's News* (1979), a study of how reporters and editors make their decisions about the news, all demonstrate his adherence to a refreshingly simple concept of sociology. "The essence of sociology," he wrote in *The Levittowners*, "is that it observes what people really do and say."

This is not the sort of perspective calculated to impress a profession as status seeking as sociology. So it is all the more striking that the profession has chosen to honor a man who, over several decades, has soberly pursued the work of telling us what we did not know about our neighbors and what we did not recognize about ourselves.

Gans's new book is in some respects an odd departure. Here is an exemplary fieldworker writing from his study. Here is a lover of cities writing candidly about decentralization and suburbanization as central features of American life. Here is a teacher who insists that good social research requires a subtle and intimate knowledge of the people

one writes about, relying for data on public opinion polls — and recommending that we develop even more polling. Here is a social democrat who argues that since we cannot expect any notable growth in political participation in this country we should make society more democratic without making it more participatory. Here is a staunch liberal asking that we recognize Christopher Lasch as a romantic and Robert Bellah as a utopian and learn to base social criticism on a more pragmatic and plain-spoken recognition of the limits and possibilities of American culture.

Middle American Individualism describes attitudes and values widely shared by "middle Americans." These are the majority of Americans who, in terms of class, sit between the poor and the upper middle class. They are, generally speaking, high school graduates but not necessarily college graduates, with family incomes between \$15,000 and \$45,000, working in a wide array of blue-collar and white-collar, industrial, bureaucratic and clerical positions. This broad swatch of the American population is deeply concerned about economic security. Their version of individualistic values stems more from this than from anything else. Distrustful of large institutions and oriented primarily to family and to a microsocial world of informal groups, they seek control over their lives.

This means that home ownership is for them a very high value. Nearly thirty years ago in Levittown Gans found that people moved to the suburbs to be able to buy their own, free-standing home, seeking in it the privacy, freedom of action and self-expression they believed a house provides. (In no small measure, Gans agreed, it does just that.) Today Gans finds people's values are essentially no different. They want a house and, for many of the same reasons, they also want a car. They place great value on the freedom to choose, but they do not place much stock in risk-taking or in originality. Their virtues are family, security and control oriented, not venturesome. Their world has been characterized, since World War II, by a loosening of ties to traditional religious, party, community and nuclear family structures as well as by their increasing affluence.

The most prominent feature of middle Americans' political activity is what Gans calls "organizational avoidance." Unlike the upper middle class, they participate very little in formal voluntary organizations. They distrust both big business and big government. This is a tradition of long standing although Gans does observe that the combination of social decentralization — people moving to areas of lower density where a home-and-outdoors-centered life is more possible — and organizational centralization — where formal organizations grow increasingly hierarchical and so become more distant — may reinforce and accelerate organizational avoidance.

Gans finds the private orientation of middle Americans so strong, and so eminently reasonable, that he is more apt to wonder why people participate in politics at all rather than why they do not. He sees many middle Americans involved in politics through "political surveillance," that is, by reading the news, and through voting, despite gradually declining participation at the polls. Nevertheless, he sees no reason to imagine any growth in political participation.

Gans proposes two substitutes for participation: greater responsiveness of and greater representation in governmental institutions. Both could be accomplished by increasing elected officials' staffs for providing constituent services. That sounds very formal and bureaucratic, but Gans sees the elected official's staff as performing the functions of the old-time precinct captains. Representation could also be increased by a broader and more diverse set of lobbying organizations, by broader and more diverse commercial and media polling organizations, by a more pluralistic set of media organizations and by more effective citizen access to the legal system. The most novel of these suggestions is Gans's proposal for a "Public Polling Service," which could conduct more polls with different sorts of questions from those we have today. He rightly observes that present polling organizations are "sufficiently close to the political and economic establishments that they ask questions mainly about current issues of concern to them." We know much more from polls about how people respond to a presidential candidate's agenda than we do about what people believe should be on that agenda.

Gans's main concern is to build up

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the "sustenance policies" of government so that middle Americans and others can trust the government for economic security when all else fails. This means more adequate unemployment insurance, better government regulation of job quality and work safety, the provision of or regulation of housing, education and health services, and the provision of jobs when the private sector falters. The centerpiece of liberal democracy, for Gans, is economic security, and the surest alliance between middle Americans and upper-middle-class liberals must be based on support for government sustenance of economic security.

This is, in a nutshell, what the book says. It is equally important to note, however, who the book is saying this to. *Middle American Individualism* is aimed at an audience that will not be embarrassed to confess allegiance to liberal democracy. Gans is a pragmatist, but not if that means managerialism whose only goal is to keep the operation afloat. Gans's pragmatism is of a Deweyan breed, a practical search to realize deeply held liberal values. His book is addressed to liberal Democrats and moderate Democrats and liberal Republicans, anyone willing to defend the basic philosophy of a modern welfare state. It is also addressed to social democrats, socialists and a variety of liberal social critics who, in Gans's view, have become ensnared in fantasies about the future of American society. He numbers in this group Richard Sennett and Christopher Lasch, who attack the materialism, hedonism and selfishness they associate with middle-class American individualism. Gans challenges the evidence: Is there more selfishness or narcissism or materialism now than in the past? He doubts it. He thinks critics of the "hedonism" of middle Americans typically confuse the moral judgment that people place too much value on private goods with an aesthetic judgment ("polyester") that they value the wrong goods. "Sermons against selfishness and attacks on self-development, or merely on the desire for more comfort," he writes, "are not likely to be effective." This is vintage Gans. As he wrote in *The Levittowners*, "Sociology is a democratic method of inquiry; it assumes that people have some right to be what they are."

A more formidable critic, and one to whom Gans obviously gives considerable respect and at least some ground, is Robert Bellah — and his co-authors of *Habits of the Heart*. Gans grants Bel-

lah's observation that Americans are nostalgic for the "small town" and the harmonious community. He acknowledges, then, that people have not only strong individualist values but access to what Bellah and colleagues call the "second language" of communitarian or civic republican values. But Gans doubts that, when the chips are down, people mean their communitarian longings — they may wish for a harmonious community, but it is a fantasy in which today's cultural and social differences and divergences of interest do not exist.

Even without doing his own field work this time around, Gans seems to be very close to what people really do and say. Can sociology aspire to more than observing what people really do and say? I think so. I would want to say, at the least, that sociology puts those observations in perspective and suggests causes, contexts and alternatives. People indeed have some right to be what they are; that should not keep others from saying, respectfully, that they might be other or even better. Gans does not take as given the existing distribution of power and wealth in society (he seeks ways to redistribute wealth and power to make the skewed distribution more humane), but he does urge reformers to accept as unyielding the aspirations, values and dreams that this distribution of power and wealth have helped give rise to. He simply does not see these middle-American individualist aspirations as very objectionable.

Middle American Individualism will not become a battle cry or banner for any social movement (although it could well become, indeed, should become, a text for a liberal presidential candidate). Gans's virtues of common sense, tolerance, plain-spoken wisdom and a skeptical attitude toward the grand theories of intellectuals removed or estranged from the social mainstream, are also his defects. There is more in his analysis to deflate than to inspire, and his suggestions for practical social changes are of a sort that would make significant differences in our lives without, however, making very compelling differences in our world views.

Gans came to this country from Nazi Germany as a boy and grew up without affluence or the expectation of it. He is profoundly un-nostalgic in ways that are almost heresy on the left (for instance, "more people are doing work in which they have pride of craft today than ever before"). He recognizes not

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only how good political participation can be but, even more, how hard it is, observing that an extremely high level of energy is "a too rarely recognized prerequisite for political activism."

His style mirrors his ideas — neither stirring nor picturesque, he writes plainly of what he sees and what he hopes for. He is a bit of a Paul Simon without

the bow tie; however, he is no more inclined to dwell in nostalgia for the New Deal than in any other nostalgia. His commitment is to the principles of social welfare and a humane and egalitarian social order, all without frills. It is as sturdy and steady a commitment as any that exists in contemporary American social thought. □

The Right Box

ELIZABETH POCHODA

BLACK BOX. By Amos Oz. Translated by Nicholas de Lange. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. 259 pp. \$19.95.

Critics are tediously polite about Amos Oz, almost always giving him the good boy treatment — a mincing awe sometimes tinged with disappointment at his drifting plots. Hardly anyone mentions that for a good boy, Oz is frequently found in bad company and that his novels are run by a consortium of Israeli cranks, bigots, no-goodniks, visionaries, malcontents, hysterics, empty-headed Sabras and abused souls whose words whistle past us on their way to making a good impression on God or history or each other. The good boy is sly; he writes these people into the story and gets credit for letting God sort them out. Oz's talent may be for comedy of a compassionate sort, but make no mistake, he really enjoys his characters, even the worst of them. And so do I. I like the way they don't at all resemble their Israeli *landsmen* on the 7 o'clock news and the way they don't feel made to order for novels either. They seem to me, Oz's creations, the secret agents of great fiction — by which I mean that they have sought out the author and he has frequently allowed them to be smarter and more knowledgeable than he.

I'm also drawn to the country these people inhabit. Even if it's not a very appealing place, it nevertheless seems to contain more possibilities than the Israel I come across everywhere else these days. Many of Oz's disturbs seem to be on the run from that Israel too, sometimes ditching a kibbutz, a marriage or the entire country, usually to come around in the end to making peace by creating a very small country of the same name.

To the spectator Oz appears to have a comrade's relation to his malcontents. His story resembles theirs. Born in Jeru-

salem in 1939, he had by the age of 15 changed most of the important signposts of his life: He had run away from the city for Kibbutz Hulda; he had changed his name from Klausner to Oz; and he had abandoned his heritage as the son of a right-wing Zionist intellectual for the healthy life of the peasant soldier on a socialist commune. That he is now a peasant soldier with ten books to his name suggests that he has come full circle, joining the new Jewish dream of neurosis-free "normality" with the older one of the People of the Book. (I have noticed recently, however, that Oz's young men are less and less apt to be both Nimrod the Hunter and Martin Buber: As they get larger and blonder and more "normal," they talk less and less and read and write almost not at all.)

The familiarity of the Oz people and their stories — questionable paternity, love triangles, desertions and so forth — may annoy readers who want a little more fictional philandering from a writer who takes them abroad. But when Oz brings you home, he leaves you there for the same reason that Tolstoy and Faulkner do: A couple of generations of people stuck in one place allows plenty of room for observations on the phases of their fate. Oz's world is certainly no bigger than Yoknapatawpha county, and his collaborations with it, like Faulkner's with his, can produce any number of interesting inflections on character and society.

Of course, the characters in Oz's stories are not pleased by the repetitions or inflections that make up their lives. The Yonatan, Havas, Rimona, Hannah and Mitya hate bumping into versions of themselves and their stories all over the place. That's one reason they are frequently frustrated and bored, almost to the point of madness or violence. (Oz knows that Tolstoy was wrong about happiness; it's the unhappy who are all alike, and they resent it.) Anyone who wants to read the Oz books

as allegories of the state of Israel, and I'm not sure it's always possible to avoid doing that, might meditate for a moment on the amount of suffocation and boredom running through their pages. Oz's people seem to know very few Arabs, just as Faulkner's seem to know few blacks. Their most serious problems are with each other and with the puzzling country they have inherited. They talk about peace but prefer excitement — in a pinch even war will do. Beset by higher longings — a legacy from the land that was to be a light unto all nations — teased by prophets and merchants of all sorts of redemption, they understandably have trouble putting up with daily life. Let us look at them in their most recent incarnation, *Black Box*.

The novel is set in 1976 (three years after the Yom Kippur War, as the author frequently reminds us, echoing the way in which all personal events are located by important dates in national history). Once again there is a love triangle. At its points are Alec Gideon, former tank commander and intellectual in exile who has recently written a book on fanaticism; his divorced wife, Ilana Brandstetter, sex bomb and prevaricator, one of Oz's flamboyantly disruptive women; and Michel Sommo, Ilana's new husband, a poor, self-pitying Moroccan Jew who plans to ride his right-wing Zionism into the occupied territories and make lucrative investments there. There is also Boaz, the son of Ilana and Alec, and Manfred Zakheim, Alec's cynical lawyer. Boaz is a giant child of 16; he is blond, almost illiterate, physically violent and the only clear-sighted person in the book. For much of the story he is on the run.

These people are brought together by the enjoyably flimsy pretext of letters. Ilana must re-establish contact with Alec, who is in Chicago, to get his financial help in controlling Boaz. Alec must reply to her, her husband and Zakheim. So back and forth with letters, telegrams, reports, reviews of Alec's book and other documents. It's a nice form for an Oz novel: Since most of his characters are monologists of some sort anyway, he has hit upon a way of letting them dispense with dialogue and scream into the wind. It suits them fine.

Boaz's troubles with school and the law are only an excuse for Ilana to open the black box containing the clues to her disastrous marriage with Alec. The immediate analogy is to the recording de-

vice that contains the information pertinent to an aircraft's crash, but, I think, the black box of physics is also apt. With the latter you know what goes into it and what emerges, but only through deduction can you guess at what happens inside. Both metaphors, but especially the second, widen the scope of the novelist's inquiry to include the land of Israel; he knows what went into its making, the pioneer dream of Palestine as a loose federation of rural communes, and what has come out, the nightmare of domination. He's now making some deductions about what went on in between, and he finds that marriage is the right box for his investigations, especially as it allows him to go into the matter of women.

Yes, women. If you put them all together, the women in Oz's novels know pretty much what there is to know about the spirit of total disillusionment cast by Zionism's attempt to produce the best country in the world. They are also aware of the costs of all that *goyish* normality. Some of these women deliver wonderfully shocking outbursts against the grand ideas of Israel's visionary patriarchs. In *The Hill of Evil Counsel* a woman tees off on her husband's heroes:

I want you to know once and for all how much I loathe, yes, loathe, your Wertheimers and Bubers and Sher-toks. I wish your terrorists would blow them all sky high.

Others, like Hannah in *My Michael* or Rimona in *A Perfect Peace*, take their revenge upon the suffocating normality that has descended upon Israel by withdrawing into powerfully nutty worlds.

"The Zionist enterprise," Oz once remarked, "was far more demanding on women." In *Black Box* you begin to see what he means. It's not so much that Ilana has little to do in either of her marriages except iron shirts and boil vegetables, or that she realizes the egalitarian ideal of Zionism did not apply to women (except for those who, like Golda Meir, were ready to go on a permanent gender vacation). There is a deeper malaise here, which comes of two addictions: one to domination and the other to the idea of perfection. At the end of *A Perfect Peace* Srulik, the secretary of the kibbutz, writes in his diary:

How can we overcome our dark desires to dominate others, to humiliate them, to subjugate them, to make them dependent on us, to chain and enslave

them with the gossamer threads of guilt, shame, and even gratitude?

Is the old man talking about women, you want to ask, or Arabs? Both. Is he speaking of the present or the past? Both. The farther back Oz reaches into the history of his country the less benign its origins look. His journalism is otherwise; there he often expresses a longing for the glories of the early socialist experiment, while his name is sometimes used by American Jews who wish us to believe that he speaks to them about the current political situation in tones more Ozick than Ozite. But the fiction always tells another story.

In *Black Box* Ilana is the improbable historian of her country. She interviews Alec's senile father, a rapacious adventurer from the first generation of settlers. She reports some of this former hard-guy's ramblings, which run on in a kind of mad regret for squandering the moment of his country's origin in smashing Arabs and conquering women. The old bully-boy generalizes about his past: "In Land of Israel there is no God and there is no love of women. So everybody gets screwed up." Ilana can testify to this. She is obscenely drawn to her former husband's crisp contempt for compassion, gentleness and love. Most of her overheated letters to him are meant to give him an erotic charge, to remind him of their matching deformities — her fire, his ice — and to arrange at this late date some fusion. It would be corny if it didn't run so deep.

Meanwhile, there is Ilana's second husband, the pint-sized zealot Michel, who means to redeem the liberated territories. Michel is one of Oz's finest creations. He is a bigoted, merciful maniac who wrings the present dry in pursuit of future perfection: He intends to get every last bit of Eretz Israel under the wire before the bell rings and the Messiah comes. Alec has his number; like most fanatics, Michel suffers from the theological disease of "higher longings," in whose name any sacrifice can be made. They're quite a pair, these husbands, the first a despairing, autocratic member of the old Ashkenazi elite who inherited the sour property and power of Israel; the second a dark immigrant, "barely a hair's breadth from the Arab," who represents lurid designs on the country's future. Both reckon on being in on the ground floor of the truth. They lack all talent for life, while Ilana shuttles between them expressing faith



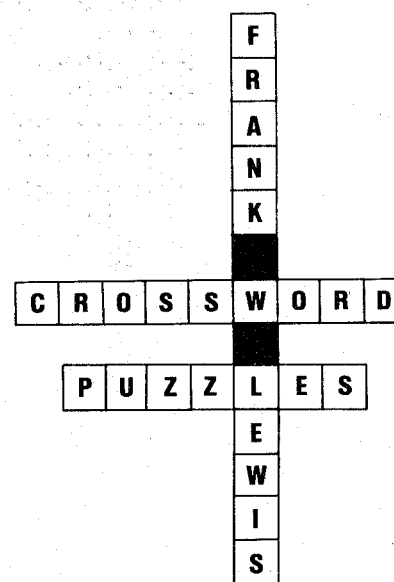
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in something she calls "happiness," and reminding them in one of her most beautiful letters that "there is a land, but we have not found it."

It looks like a stalemate, but that is not where Oz leaves matters, being neither a pessimist like Alec nor a prophet of perfection. There is also Boaz, the giant child everyone wants to control. He takes up residence in the crumbling castle that once belonged to Alec's father and establishes there a freelance kibbutz of sorts, redesigning the pioneering dream according to his own crude commandments, which his mother has written down for him:

I. Pity them all. II. Take more notice of the stars. III. Against being bitter.

IV. Against making fun. V. Against hating. VI. Bastards are still human beings, not shit. VII. Against beating up. VIII. Against killing. IX. Not to eat each other. X. Cool it.

Not exactly Martin Buber, but appealing enough to draw his mother to his commune, and then his dying father, and then, at least in Ilana's fantasy, Michel, his stepfather. Another happy Oz triangle in which everyone relinquishes something—a sexual version of land for peace—comic in the tininess of its solution, capacious in its insistence that no one owns the truth, Ozite in the irony that this little civilization without territorial boundaries is exactly what the Jews had for almost two millennia. □

The Small Time

STUART KLAWANS

The subject of Diana G. Collier's new novel is poverty: urban poverty, women's poverty, S.R.O. poverty. The setting is downtown Washington, a few blocks from the Capitol and the Smithsonian Institution, near streets with expensive sidewalk cafés and lovingly refurbished homes. The characters are the inhabitants of a women's residence, paying \$54 a week for single rooms, no cooking allowed, toilet down the hall. Welcome to hell.

It is as easy for a reader to turn away from such a novel as it is for the well-fed, well-meaning citizen to look the other way on the street. So let me assure you: Collier's novel is just that, a work of literature, not a leaden exposé of what we should already know. Here is her description of the pay phone in the residence: "For half an hour perhaps, the phone gobbled up change as somebody looked for a job or another place to live. . . . It was as if the phone got its appetite up, like a slot machine with an unlucky player." Or here is the elderly manager of a decent apartment building, sitting in the lobby with a friend and politely turning away lease applications from the underclass: "The two old women shook their heads in unison and smiled. . . . They looked and smelled like two pieces of expensive candy."

Such comments come from the outside, of course, from an observer who can afford irony. Collier therefore keeps them rare, narrating most of the novel

in a style of inch-by-inch naturalism from the point of view of one Abby-Jean Brown, a country girl who has left home to ease her family's poverty, only to spend her first two nights in Washington sleeping in the bus station. Like the other women in the S.R.O., Abby-Jean has to fight to get in, then spends the rest of the novel fighting to get out. Collier spares the reader nothing of Abby-Jean's experience—not the texture of sweaty sheets on her bed, not the emptiness of the dim halls, not the flavor of the air or the clatter of roaches or the pressure of feeling exposed to the people across the air shaft. All this is harrowing; but it is not generic misery. Rather, it is the substance of Abby-Jean's life, and she is a thoroughly convincing character who combines the energy and naïveté of youth with a certain coldness of eye. To the degree that Collier's novel succeeds—and it succeeds to a high degree—it does so through the justness of Abby-Jean.

I don't want to make too large a claim. Despite Collier's best efforts, parts of the novel read like a seminar on "Topics in Contemporary Urban Poverty." Collier also had to deal with the probably insoluble difficulty of ending the story; she chose a method that is certainly true to life, given the fate of S.R.O.s, but not all that true to fiction. Even so, I think the only truly bad thing about the book is its title, which I have withheld till now in the hope you would forgive it. Collier calls the book *The Invisible Women of Washington*. You can get a copy—I hope you will—for \$10,

plus \$1.50 postage, from Clarity Press, Suite 469, 3277 Roswell Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30305.

At Home With the Poets: Gary Soto and Robert Peters have turned to prose momentarily with collections of autobiographical sketches. Soto's, titled *Lesser Evils: Ten Quartets*, is the more free and easy of the two, casually moving back and forth from his boyhood in Sacramento, California, to his present home life and occupations in the San Francisco Bay area. Peters's book, although also patched together from vignettes, is more of a whole, more deliberately literary. Organized by seasons, it is a memoir of one year's cycle from his youth, when he lived on a Wisconsin farm.

Crunching Gravel: Growing Up in the Thirties takes its subtitle from the Depression era and its title from a comment by Peters's high-school principal: "If you lived in the sticks you were lice on a pig's behind. All the roads were covered with gravel—no blacktop then. And your shoes crunched walking on it." Peters, who slept on bleached flour-sacks and shared the Saturday-night bath water with two siblings (they drew straws to decide who would go first), had little in the way of culture at home, but enough to make him a poet. There was the radio; there was a Bible with illustrations by Doré; and there was nature, not a summer tourist's nature but the stuff of ploughing and fishing and slaughtering pigs. He also had this advantage: His parents, though themselves unschooled, "believed in education."

During the year he's chosen to recall, Peters was around 11 and entering high school. Although he lacked some of the expected manly virtues, such as calmness around firearms and an avidity for fights, his father did not press him. He was free to pursue his intellectual awakening, as well as the sexual one that hit then, accompanied by a bout of religiosity.

Compared with the bracing atmosphere of Peters's memoir, with its feeling of meditations on a frosty Wisconsin night, the weather in Soto's *Lesser Evils* is more the type for hanging out on the front stoop. His essays read like monologues, in which even the frequent self-revelations are played for entertainment value. They also have the slightly resigned tone of the writer who came up in the 1960s and now feels it's time to act his age. Soto begins with an essay about speaking at a conference on minorities and the media, where he said all the

right things, even endorsing a boycott against Hollywood films. But he admits his heart wasn't in it and adds that he ate tuna sandwiches for dinner that night and the next because his wife and daughter were out of town.

At his most relaxed, Soto lets himself fill up an essay with the plot of a movie he's just seen; or he will write once too often about the sexual attractions of women with overbites. At their best, though, his essays have the unforced charm you hope for in conversation. Peters's book is the memoir of a poet, in which the man's calling informs every detail of the boy's life. Soto's essays, significantly enough, rarely mention poetry. The notable exception is his account of how he remarked on his success when playing the dozens with a fellow poet. My recommendation is that you budget Soto's essays. Read one a day, and at the end of six weeks you'll feel you've made a friend (*Crunching Gravel*: \$14.95 from Mercury House, 300 Montgomery St., Suite 700, San Francisco, CA 94104; *Lesser Evils*: \$8.50 from Arte Publico Press, University of Houston, 4800 Calhoun, 429AH, Houston, TX 77004).

Yahu-Wahu: Since I assume that your heart, too, sinks at the very words "Middle East," let me recommend the latest installment in Larry Gonick's *The Cartoon History of the Universe*. Volume 4, covering the period circa 1400 B.C. to 586 B.C., is titled *Part of the Old Testament* and should provide you with an ample dose of historical perspective and black humor.

Gonick's draftsmanship is in the great, vulgar tradition of *Smokey Stover* and *The Katzenjammer Kids*, with plenty of bulging eyeballs and squirting bodily fluids. His writing is a borscht belt comic's adaptation of the higher criticism, complete with footnote panels at the bottom of the page and an annotated bibliography on the inside back cover. I particularly like the way Gonick makes a running gag out of the Divine Name, which might have been pronounced not as "Yehowah" or "Yahweh" but "Yahu-Wahu." As the children of Israel go about their business—invading Canaan, slaughtering various tribes and each other, engaging in palace intrigues and civil wars—they do so with hearty cries of "Yahoo! Wahoo!" True, the spiritual side of the Old Testament gets scant attention; but then, this is history, starting with five waves of pre-Israelite

invasions and ending with Nebuchadnezzar poking out the eyes of Zedekiah. "Where'd you get this idea, Sire?" asks his minister. "Ever see *The 3 Stooges Go to Babylon*?" sez Nebu. Watch for Volume 5, *Brains and Bronze: The Rise of Ancient Greece*, coming soon to a comic-book store near you (\$2.50 from Rip Off Press, Inc., Dept. CHU, Box 14158, San Francisco, CA 94114).

More Neat Stuff to Read: There has been a recent and very welcome Thomas McGrath revival in the small press. *Tri-Quarterly* devoted the whole of its Fall 1987 number to him, including a new set of poems; excerpts from his major work, "Letter to an Imaginary Friend"; an interview; and homages from the likes of Philip Levine and E.P. Thompson. This is as good an introduction to McGrath as you're likely to find (\$6.95, c/o 2020 Ridge, Evanston, IL 60208). The Fall 1987 issue of *Poetry East* is also dedicated to McGrath; this tribute includes essays by Hayden Carruth and Diane Wakoski and twenty-four poems by McGrath (\$7, c/o Department of English, DePaul University, 802 W. Belden, Chicago, IL 60614). McGrath's 1957 dystopian novel, *The Gates of Ivory*, *The Gates of Horn*, perhaps the most fully imagined response to McCarthyism ever written, has been reissued by Another Chicago Press (\$7.95, c/o Box 816, Oak Park, IL 60303). I also understand that Copper Canyon Press is bringing out a McGrath *Selected Poems*, edited by Sam Hamill.

McGrath is in his 70s now, a poet of lavish gifts who also has that rare thing in our time, a public voice—so why is he absent from the anthologies and unheard of in academic criticism? You might find part of the answer in *Green Isle in the Sea: An Informal History of the Alternative Press, 1960-85*, edited by Diane Kruckow and Curt Johnson. The book consists of interviews with twenty-four editors and writers from as many alternative literary presses, ranging from Alta of Shameless Hussy Press to A.D. Winans of *Second Coming*. The section to which I direct your attention, though, is Curt Johnson's afterword, in which he is rude enough to mention that the quasi-official small press of the 1940s through the 1970s, and the official literary culture, had a common benefactor in the Central Intelligence Agency. This will not come as a revelation to anyone who has followed the scene; but Johnson's essay serves

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nicely as a summary of the payoffs, politicking and influence-peddling that make up literary culture, and will help explain why McGrath, shunned by the big-time publishers because of his politics, was also invisible in the approved small press (\$12.50, c/o Chicago Review Press, 213 W. Institute Place, Chicago, IL 60610).

The Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church in New York City has a new magazine, *Cuz*, edited by Richard Meyers. All selections in the first issue are by people who performed last year in the church's Monday-night reading series. There are about as many prose pieces as poems; some of the notable ones are an essay by Eileen Myles, explaining how she came to write her poem "Hot Night," and a memoir by Cookie Mueller about go-go dancing in New York and New Jersey ten years ago (\$2.95, c/o The Poetry Project, 10th St. and 2nd Ave., New York, NY 10003).

I have been too slow to mention that the Fall 1987 number of *Witness* is a special issue of writings from prison, edited by Fielding Dawson. The selections come from entries to the PEN Prison Committee's annual writing contest for inmates. Perhaps the most heart-breaking detail of the collection, as Dawson notes in his introduction, is the refrain in the biographies of those winners who have been released: "Cannot be located" (\$5, c/o 31000 Northwestern Highway, Suite 200, Farmington Hills, MI 48018).

Farmer's Market, published twice a year, is an outlet for writers and artists from the Midwest; it also publishes people who live elsewhere, so long as the work feels right for Galesburg, Illinois. My favorite piece from the Winter 1988 issue is a poem by Linda Back McKay titled "I wear my WOJB Radio cap with the feather to embarrass the children" (\$3.50, c/o Box 1272, Galesburg, IL 61402).

To end on a happy note: McPherson and Company has brought together twenty years' worth of the fictions of Pamela Zoline in a handsome collection titled *The Heat Death of the Universe and Other Stories*. I yield the last word to Thomas M. Disch, who provides an introduction to the stories, "each one so different, each so anomalous in its intention and inspiration, each so neatly balanced between the most rarified artistry and the most sensational emotional assault-and-battery" (\$10, c/o Box 1126, Kingston, NY 12401). □

FILMS.

MICHELE WALLACE

She's Gotta Have It *School Daze*

In *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, Harold Cruse defined and described the impossibility for Afro-Americans of ever isolating a pure separatist or integrationist agenda. Yet in his rush to supply prescriptions, Cruse missed the implications of his own scholarship: "Integration," he warned, "is . . . leading to cultural negation." As Cruse saw it, integration-minded intellectuals like James Baldwin and Lorraine Hansberry were infected with a lethal dose of false consciousness — a severe case of neither knowing nor caring what was *really* black. Thus Cruse called for profound changes in black self-perception: Black intellectuals needed to toughen up, think more collectively and, above all, black up their political, economic and cultural projects, which they promptly did in the context of Black Power.

Almost twenty years after Cruse's initial call, black critic Greg Tate surveyed the results for high and low culture in a list-heavy celebration titled "The Return of The Black Aesthetic: Cult-Nats Meet Freaky-Deke" (*Village Voice Literary Supplement*, December 1986). Tate proposed postmodernism as a way to heal the apparent schism between assimilation and cultural nationalism. "Black artists," he wrote, "have opened up the entire 'text of blackness' for fun and games," which meant that it was no longer necessary to insist on African origins or the absence of European influences as the basis of black identity.

Tate's most encouraging sign of the new age was *She's Gotta Have It*, a low-budget feature made by a young black filmmaker named Spike Lee, which Tate described as "a populist black post-structuralist dream." Not only had Lee formulated "an uncompromisingly black vision," he had "shot [the film] for jackshit with a collectivist cast and crew," thus demolishing "Hollywood's megabudget mystique." This was consistent with Tate's notion of a cultural resistance that "doesn't aim for tran-

Michele Wallace, the author of Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (Warner), is currently working on a book of cultural criticism.

scendence of corporate culture's limits into some mystical liberated zone, but for critical intervention in the process by which capitalism is rationalized through mass culture and modernism." Cultural assimilation and even accommodation were now O.K., provided they were in a separatist framework. Yet Tate also applauded Lee's "raceman" views on "Whoopi's blue contacts, Michael's nose" and *The Color Purple*: not black enough.

When it came to apparent transgressions in the field of sexuality, the charge of racial inauthenticity was brought out, brushed off and presented as though it were brand-new. Issues of sexual difference were the special blind spot of Tate's theoretical formulations: Women emerged only as also-rans in his numerous lists of who's getting it right, from Miles Davis to Amiri Baraka to Nona Hendryx. Nor did it appear relevant to mention that *She's Gotta Have It*, the showpiece of the new black aesthetic, was about a black woman who couldn't get enough of the old phallus, and who therefore had to be raped. Tate's obsession with the prison-house of historical narrative (blacks have only walk-on parts in Western Civilization's version) and the groovy way it could be replaced by filmic spectacle, or "fun and games," rendered superfluous the mundane observation that in such spectacles, women almost always occupy a different status.

Since Tate's 1986 declarations, Spike Lee has provided further proof of some kind of major continental drift. His books, *Spike Lee's Gotta Have It* and *Uplift the Race: The Construction of School Daze* (the latter co-authored by Lisa Jones, both published by Simon & Schuster), as well as his new movie, *School Daze*, all participate in Tate's ambiguous vision of "blackness." This spring, Lee made a black-and-white, *vérité* campaign commercial for Jesse Jackson, and another movie is in the works. Melvin Van Peebles, whom this movement embraces as spiritual father, is also making a movie this summer. So is Robert Townsend, a West Coast actor who tired of the film industry's racism and decided to make his own vehicle. There are reported spinoffs from both the Lee and the Townsend projects as well. Perhaps film's indeterminacy and power make it seem the likely place for black American culture to emerge from disadvantage and invisibility. But there's a problem here, too, with which the "blaxploitation" films of the 1960s and 1970s thoroughly acquainted us.

Black films are obviously untenable without popular success in somebody's marketplace. I hope Lee, Townsend and Van Peebles et al. are not intending to demonstrate that black filmmakers can reclaim blaxploitation without revising its use of female humiliation as an inevitable byproduct of plot resolution.

The only way to avoid a renaissance of filmic black sexism — while this is still a movement and not yet a full-blown industry — would be to take on the field of sexual difference deliberately and oppositionally. At first, it seemed that Spike Lee had done exactly that with *She's Gotta Have It*. "It always amazed me," Lee wrote in the journal he kept while making the film, "how men can go out and bone any and everything between fifteen and eighty and it's OK. They are encouraged to have and enjoy sex, while it's not so for women. If they do what men do they're labeled whore, prostitute, freaks, nympho, etc. Why this double standard? Why not explore this?"

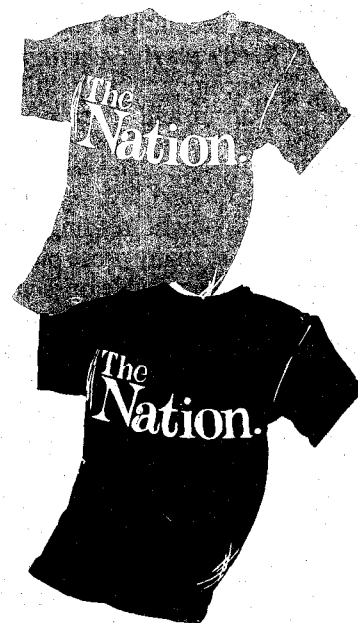
Lee thus invents a sex-loving female character named Nola Darling, who has three male lovers: Greer Childs, a narcissistic Buppie actor who likes being seen with Nola because she's attractive; Jamie Overstreet, a solid, average guy who wants to marry her; and Mars Blackmon, played by Lee himself, a B-boy on a bicycle who always makes Nola laugh. Nola, her male lovers and her female friends all address the camera to supply competing versions of who she really is. The structure of the film thus subverts whatever masculine authority Lee, as director, writer and producer, intermittently imposes.

But this film's fun has its limits. Significantly, *She's Gotta Have It* begins with an epigraph from the beginning of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, in which Zora Neale Hurston romanticizes the irreconcilability of men and women. Nola's three lovers also remind me of Janie's three husbands in Hurston's novel. Jamie seems most like Logan Killicks, who offers Janie the lackluster security of forty acres and a mule and wants to degrade her when she fails to appreciate it. Greer Childs resembles Joe Starks, who becomes the mayor of an all-black town and wants to put Janie on a pedestal. Teacake, who offers Janie pleasure and companionship "on the muck" among the "folk farthest down," seems a dead ringer for Mars Blackmon, whose love of fun emerges as a critique of conventional masculinity.

Although it is Jamie who finally rapes Nola into submission when she refuses to marry him, Lee's journal clearly suggests that he views Jamie as the best man among her lovers. For instance, Lee often remarks that while Nola has sex with all three men, she has orgasms only with Jamie. He has to caution himself against writing too many scenes in which Nola is crying. He doesn't know how Nola should react to Jamie's rape. Should she enjoy it? He settles for having Jamie reluctantly admit that *he* enjoyed it. Perhaps most important, Lee never calls it a rape. These matters work out considerably better in the film than in the notebooks — on screen, Lee resists the obvious conclusion, in which the best man marries Nola, the prize. But the film's mistrust of female sexuality is disturbingly obvious in Lee's handling of Nola's relationship with her lesbian friend, Opal Gilstrap, who comes on like the original serpent in the Garden of Eden. In many ways, especially in the scene where Lee's puckered lips traverse her flesh, Nola seems less a character than a dark continent to be explored and conquered. Although she addresses the camera directly, her language seems inane and self-canceling, as if she were selling something in a TV commercial. Still, *She's Gotta Have It* left me eager to see what Lee would do next.

School Daze takes on a scene that is already familiar to readers of the canon of Afro-American literature. It's the black college campus of Booker T. Washington's *Up From Slavery*, W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, Jean Toomer's *Cane*, Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, Amiri Baraka's *Tales*. But such literary allusions cannot hope to compete with the film's animated pastiche of classic homecoming-football-game movies, slapstick humor and sight gags, Motown and Busby Berkeley production numbers, jazz, r&b and funk performance, black English, style and dance. To the perennial question of the classic Afro-American literary text — What kind of education can a black man expect, even at a black college, except a lesson in how to heel to a white master? — Lee replies "not much," in a film pointedly devoid of classrooms, professors and all the appurtenances of study. My question then becomes, reluctantly, What kind of education can a black woman expect to receive as audience for this film?

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School Daze is a postmodern film version of Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, with the dichotomies of Pan-Africanism versus accommodationist economics and black pride versus assimilation transposed into the madcap goings-on of pop cult's *Animal House* and the neocultural nationalism of Ishmael Reed's playful *Mumbo Jumbo*. But the accompanying political issues of separatism and integration are all but silenced by the film's all-black universe. Also prominently displayed is postmodernism's vision of women as monster kewpie dolls, whose wayward desires require on-screen punishment in movies such as *Half Moon Street*, *Blue Velvet*, *Mona Lisa*, *The House of Games* and *Ironweed*. While the film halfheartedly focuses on a conflict between students and administration over whether black Mission College should divest from South Africa, its obsession is with gender and sexuality: The viewer is invited to witness entirely distinct male and female versions of a contest between light-skinned, affluent Wannabees and dark-skinned, nappy-haired, lower-class Jigaboos.

The film's opening scene provides us with an introduction to the major male contingents, who generally devote their attention to global issues of cultural leadership or political responsibility (although a lot of what they do appears to be very silly). Dap, the story's proto-nationalist hero, and da Fellas, or male Jigaboos, are participating in a rally to protest South African apartheid and the failure of Mission College to divest. The

president of the college, and the president of the board of trustees, either or both of whom participated in the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s, are watching from an administration building window. Trouble promptly arrives in the form of the stylishly dressed Gamma Phi Gammas, the principal contingent of the Wannabees, led by a proto-Nazi Big Brother Almighty and flanked by the glamorous Gamma Rays. They don't give a damn about divestment or the plight of South African blacks. As Julian, Big Brother Almighty, so succinctly puts it, "I'm from Detroit! Motown!"

The particular cause of conflict is the display the Gammas are making of breaking in eight baldheaded, sycophantic, slavetlike pledges, who are being led along, chain-gang style, on leashes. "It take a real man to be a Gamma man!" the Gammmites chant at the top of their lungs, "Because only a Gamma man is a real man!" Among these Gammmites, occupying a uniquely liminal status in the text (in that he is the only character we see communicating effectively with both groups) is none other than the big-eyed auteur Spike Lee, as Half-Pint, Dap's cousin, who is director, producer and writer of this film as well.

The women, both Jigaboos and Wannabees, take no apparent interest in either politics or culture except as passive consumers. The Gamma Rays wear expensive clothes, elaborate Farrah Fawcett hairdos and lots of makeup. The film's preoccupation is with their falseness, which reflects both their "wannabee whiteness" and their femi-

ninity — as though they were black women in white women's drag. Jigaboo women, on the other hand, are natural women with natural hair; the film focuses on them primarily as objects of ridicule, humor and negation. Rachel, Dap's girlfriend, "the darkest thing on campus" in her own words, seems the leader of the Jigaboo women by default. She doesn't really do anything except march alongside Dap, have sex with him and argue with him about whether she should finally, in her senior year, pledge a sorority, which seems a puzzling contradiction of the Jigaboo stance.

Women's affairs are epitomized by the film's largest musical number, "Straight and Nappy." Suddenly, Wannabee and Jigaboo women are transported to a mod-colored Madame Res-Res's Hair Salon to have it out. The Cotton Club music and the Josephine Baker dancing have all the heat and none of the dignity of the confrontation between white and Puerto Rican boys in *West Side Story*. Although a comically fat Jigaboo dancer weighs in against the nappy-headed side, otherwise slender female dancers, black and tan, battle early in the film for this ambiguous turf. At one point, Jigaboos don masks of Vivien Leigh playing Scarlett O'Hara to present a mirror image to Wannabee women. The Wannabees respond by donning masks of Hattie McDaniels playing her Mammy. Which would you rather be? For women, either/or is really neither/nor.

On an even lower scale in the film's visual economy are the local yokels, or street bloods. Their confrontation with the Fellas at Church's Fried Chicken begins when one local yokel, feigning femininity, asks, "Is it true what they say about Mission men?" It ends with one of the Fellas saying that a local yokel looks "just like a bitch" because he uses Jerri Curl on his hair and wears a shower cap in the street. Thus, at the only moment when the film takes on the plight of poor black men, it simultaneously refuses even to consider black homosexual legitimacy.

I saw *School Daze* for the second time in Brooklyn's Fulton Mall, not far from where Jamie's first meeting with Nola in *She's Gotta Have It* was filmed. It was a Friday afternoon and the audience was packed with black women, teenagers and children. Every time the Jigaboo women came on the screen, perhaps because of their dark skin and their free-form, unstraightened hair, there was the uncomfortable laughter of

INTO THE VALLEY

The carts are lumbering toward the valley,
brushwood smoke lies stagnant, blue-gray and bitter,
one last bee is probing — in vain — the meadow saffron;
slow, heavy with water, the landslides slither downward.
Suddenly from the larches mist rises as if summoned:
in vain I plod after it with ponderous footsteps.
Soon it will fall again as rain: the season has ended.
Our half of the world is sailing into winter
and soon the end will come to all our seasons:
and these strong legs — how long will they obey me?
It's grown late for living and for loving,
for piercing heaven and grasping the world's meaning.
It's time to descend now
into the valley, with faces blank and silent,
and find refuge in shadows from our sorrows.

5 September 1979

Primo Levi (translated from
the Italian by M.L. Rosenthal)

disapproval. When the Gamma Rays appeared, there was more often the silence of complete immersion, or the cat-calls of men, or the involuntary "ooh-ing" of admiration. After all, the Gamma Rays look more like the women we're all used to seeing on movie screens. They also have their own musical number.

At the coronation of the Homecoming Queen, Gamma queen Jane Toussaint, who has long blond (dyed?) hair and blue eyes (contact lenses?), and the Gamma Rays, svelte and glamorous, sing "Be Alone Tonight" in a slick imitation of a Motown girl group. The four women perform in slinky silver-and-black gowns with bows and ruffles from their knees to their ankles. They wear black patent leather high heels and sparkles in their long, cascading hair, t&a emphasized by dress cut and pelvis-gyrating choreography. They look like the ultimate Virginia Slims advertisement.

Light-skinned Jane Toussaint—who whispers softly à la both white and black girl groups in the 1960s, "Boy, you know I love you"—is set up by this resplendent presentation of her wares for the anachronistic rape that will climax the film. While the dastardly deed is technically done by Half-Pint, he is commanded to do it by Julian, Big Brother Almighty, while fellow Gammas wait in the hall. That Jane is also tricked into agreeing to it by her boyfriend only makes this act seem more like the collective will of the text, figurative gang rape as filmic imperative. Dap, presumably the representative of this film's utopianism—just as Jamie was the ideal image of masculinity in *She's Gotta Have It*—is moved to take the drastic action of waking everybody up at dawn, because he sees Half-Pint's act as going too far. But where does Lee stand in all of this, with Dap or with Half-Pint, whom he plays? And dare we interpret his progress from playing "the man who makes her laugh" to playing the rapist by popular demand?

I sat through *School Daze* twice that day in Brooklyn, wondering about my own increasing willingness to luxuriate in the film's youthful images and its seductive, playful musical score. I stopped in the theater's bathroom before I left. Two women were humming and singing "Do the Butt," one of the film's big musical performances, which has since become a hit on black radio. But there was a third woman who wasn't humming anything. She was standing in front of the mirror trying to comb her

hair. Full-figured with dark brown skin, her short hair dyed traffic-light blond and covered with a long blond fall attached to a cloth headband, she was no "wannabee" in any sense that *School Daze* could articulate. She kept trying to comb the fall, which had grown stiff and artificial looking, into a shape that might approximate the one it had been in when she'd purchased it. On her young, pretty face, she had that worried look black women often assume in public places when they look in the mirror.

I couldn't figure out how this woman could fail to see a relationship between her dilemma and the film she'd just seen. Did she resent Jane, identify with her, or perhaps a little bit of both? Moreover, I had the uneasy suspicion that the blond hairpiece and the blond dye had something to do with that curious process by which black female frustration becomes black female fashion. Which leads me to wonder: Can black women survive another dose of "Black Pride"? □

THEATER.

THOMAS M. DISCH

Carrie
Largely/New York

Carrie, the Royal Shakespeare Company's musical that just expired at the Virginia Theatre, is based on the movie by Brian de Palma, which is based on the book by Stephen King, which is based on the story of Cinderella, and it's as much fun in its latest incarnation as ever. Much of the fun is salacious, and in its larger emotive moments *Carrie* is subject to delusions of aesthetic grandeur, but at the simple level of how well did I enjoy myself I have to confess, with a bit of a smirk, more than at any other musical this season. The dance numbers by Debbie Allen are abundant and zestfully raunchy. Allen has Bob Fosse's knack for elaborating a simple bump and grind into a narrative ballet, and the two teenage villains of the story, danced by Charlotte d'Amboise and Gene Anthony Ray, are brought to life almost exclusively by her choreography.

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Pitchford, and belted out by Linzi Hatley as Carrie, Betty Buckley as her Bible-crazed mother and Darlene Love as Miss Gardner, Carrie's gym teacher-cum-fairy godmother. There are more songs in this show with the autonomous musical zap of a Top-40 contender than in all the rest of the season's shows put together (excepting *Sarafina!* and *The Gospel at Colonius*, both written in musical idioms that don't have the same chart appeal). Moreover, the songs are not only listenable, they're dramatically effective.

And there's the rub. Because for many in the audience the dramatic premise of *Carrie* is repugnant and insupportable, a wish-fulfillment fantasy for very naughty ids. Frank Rich in *The New York Times* practically went berserk in his vituperations, dismissing as ludicrous and inane the opening dance number of Act II, "Out for Blood," and comparing it to the classic Broadway bomb, *Moose Murders*. I think the rumble scene in *West Side Story* would be an apter comparison. "Out for Blood," which enacts the ritual slaughter of a pig, is a catchy paean to bloodlust, in the worst possible taste and with a beat you can't resist. As such it's a fair sample of *Carrie*'s dramatic appeal, a tale in which a fat, lame-brained Cinderella is caught between the Scylla of a repressive, fundamentalist mother and the Charybdis of a high-school peer group with the moral instincts of Euripides' *Bacchae*. Horror, as a genre, bubbles up from the same psychic magma that produces nightmares; sex and violence are its principal concerns. Invariably, the most vivid and innovative works in the genre—E.C. Comics, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*—have been sneered at by critics when they couldn't be ignored. Viewed in that light, Frank Rich's across-the-board dismissal of *Carrie* is its most authenticating accolade.

My enthusiasm isn't limitless. Inevitably, the pyrotechnics of the movie's pyromaniacal ending are impossible to duplicate onstage. The villainy of Carrie's mother is diminished in the interest of brightening the emotional palette of the songs given to Betty Buckley, an emphasis that may well have been generated by the need to adapt the role to the capabilities of its original interpreter, Barbara Cook, who departed the cast before the show had left its launch pad at Stratford-on-Avon. The epilogue, which takes place on a stagewide stairway (to Paradise?), is a dramatic non sequitur and seems to exist simply for

the sake of letting Buckley have the last word musically. All these departures from the original book and movie have clearly been engineered in the interest of tuning *Carrie* to the supposedly tenderer sensibilities of the Broadway audience, which is primarily made up of moms and dads who attend the theater to have their values affirmed, not doused with pig's blood.

Director Terry Hands does his level best to manage the transition to good taste without abandoning the story's *raison d'être*, staging the initial girls'-locker-room scene (a piece of voyeuristic divinity fudge in the movie) in a manner no more lubricious, technically, than a Miss America pageant, but thoroughly steamy even so. On the whole, Hands and Lawrence D. Cohen (who wrote the book and, earlier, the screenplay) manage to have it both ways, creating a moral atmosphere in which sweet and sinister coexist with archetypal simplicity, as in an X-rated Disney cartoon.

Alas, even as this review goes to press, it is too late to see *Carrie*. *The Times* reports that the "critically lambasted" musical has closed after only five performances and sixteen previews, for a record-setting loss of \$7 million. The fault is not wholly ascribable to Frank Rich's review. In time word-of-mouth might have spread among those with an appetite for dirty dancing and glorious excess, but time is money, and director Terry Hands is quoted to the effect that earlier delays had "cost a fortune and used up our reserve funds."

Much as I disagree with Rich about the show's merits, I don't think he's to be blamed for his sincere squeamishness, which doubtless is a fair reflection of *The Times*'s middlebrow and middle-aged readership. The blame properly is the R.S.C.'s for their too sanguine estimation of Broadway's digestive capabilities. The musical *Carrie* ought to have gone directly to film, in which form it could have reached that more youthful audience that can daydream blithely of their high school's firebombing.

Carrie's demise is one more reminder that Broadway Theater is a species doomed to fossilization and eventual extinction. The electronic media will continue to attract younger and more venturesome audiences and artists, and the Great White Way will become Manhattan's Disneyland, where a few megahits (like *Cats* and *Chorus Line*) and one or two publicly funded official Works of Art (such as *Speed-the-Plow*) will play to busloads of tourists and conventioners. Indeed, that is pretty much how things

stand now, and the anticipated malling of midtown into a sleaze-free *cordon sanitaire* can only accelerate the process.

It is also too late to catch meta-clown Bill Irwin & Friends' new show at City Center, *Largely/New York*, but I expect that *L/NY*, like Irwin's earlier *The Regard of Flight*, will be recirculated in various forms at various venues for some time to come. In this show Irwin as a mime crosses the nonverbal border into dance, assisted by choreographer Kimi Okada. Okada's contributions are distinctly less witty than Irwin's, the dancers all functioning more or less as straight men. Irwin's persona is that of a klutzy, bumpkinish shy guy who mimes Who? Me? when invited to break dance and then, of course, shows his black friends (Leon Chesney and John Christian, who have all the right moves) that shy guys can boogie too. Or, confronted with the opposite sex in the person of Cunningham alumna Meg Eginton, Irwin is a Chaplinesque stumblebum in wistful pursuit of a woman to whom he's invisible.

Conceptually, there is not a lot to be said for Irwin's dramatic schema, but he is an inspired comedian with a juggler's instinct for timing. With one central comic prop, a remote-control beeper that (very erratically) controls the lighting, sound system and movements of four sets of curtains, Irwin builds up a structure of gags that get funnier and funnier even as they take on the complex structural beauty of a model of a DNA molecule.

As a satire on dance styles, *Largely/New York* falls short of Bob Bowyer's across-the-board dance parody, *Funny Feet*, of a year ago. The break dancing is presented with straightforward gosh-wow respect, and the only pretensions of modern dance to be lampooned are its penchant for unearned angst and its air of narcissistic imperturbability. There is a great deal of fun had at the expense of an onstage video camera and monitor; a great deal too much, eventually. And Jeff Gordon, in cap and gown, does repeated somersaulting dives from the edge of the stage into the orchestra pit; after a while the wonder wears off.

All in all, I wish that Irwin would find his voice again. There's something so, forgive the expression, genteel, about mime. Meanwhile it was reassuring to see that Irwin hasn't yet been tempted into the worst excesses of seriousness by his quarter-million-dollar grant from the MacArthur Foundation. But the danger is clear and present. □

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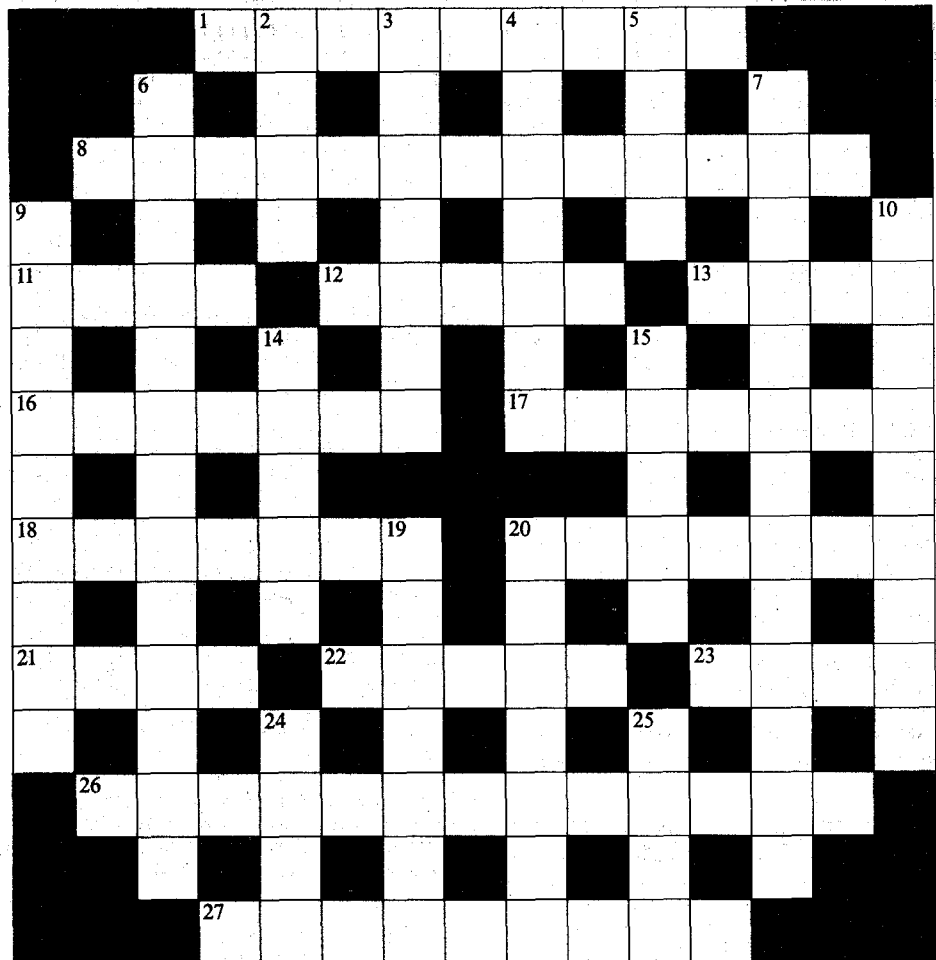
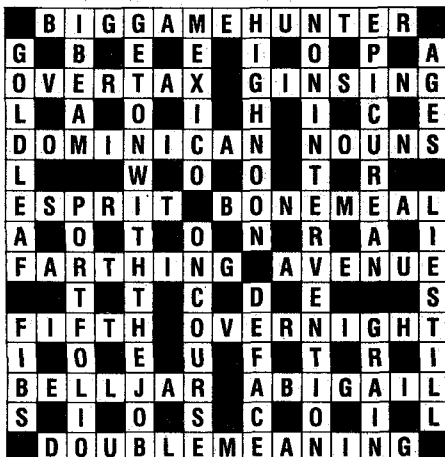
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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2199



ACROSS

- 1 and 24 down What Tom Sawyer had more than one of, with a few being inclined to take risks. (13)
8 High military types? What the defeated type sometimes does under such to be fit for the rough-and-tumble fight. (5,8)
11 See 2 down
12 See 27
13 Part of the gear I associate with operatic rendition. (4)
16 There's a place for the retired person at the station. (It reputedly had a gum deposit at one time.) (7)
17 Smoothing things out late in the day? (7)
18 Part of the get-up ain't edifying, but it's nicely colored, perhaps! (7)
20 Fashionable town for the old British Navy? (7)
21 The sound of unfavorable opinions by which close races are decided. (4)
22 Poet-actor of many years' standing? (5)
23 I proceed "right on" for the Prince of Operas. (4)
26 A visitor to the Emerald City meets people who talk of a famous one of mysteries. (7,6)
27 and 12 Where the Nashville type is taking air from the ball, perhaps? (A certain evening is recalled by it.) (9,5)

DOWN

- 2 and 11 across How one might find the record ended? (8)

- 3 A very large deer (a stag) found specifically in Indiana. (7)
4 One who has property committed to him sounds as though he was once committed himself, showing signs of age in the driver's spot. (7)
5 A disreputable person used to clean up outside. (4)
6 A confession obtained without coercion might imply the show is open. (4,9)
7 Nine in place of cars? (They should obviously look good in stripes.) (7,6)
9 Do they hold the badge of the London police—or only locks? (5,4)
10 An old torpedo shows what some want to do to the bomb—and lots more! (9)
14 Pointillist work is crazy, as they say! (5)
15 Part of the step, I dare say, is not so hot! (5)
19 The first of Louis's sons, typically. (7)
20 The way Jacques finds good purposes for extra rewards. (7)
24 See 1 across
25 The old city now takes its turn in London! (4)

PUZZLED?

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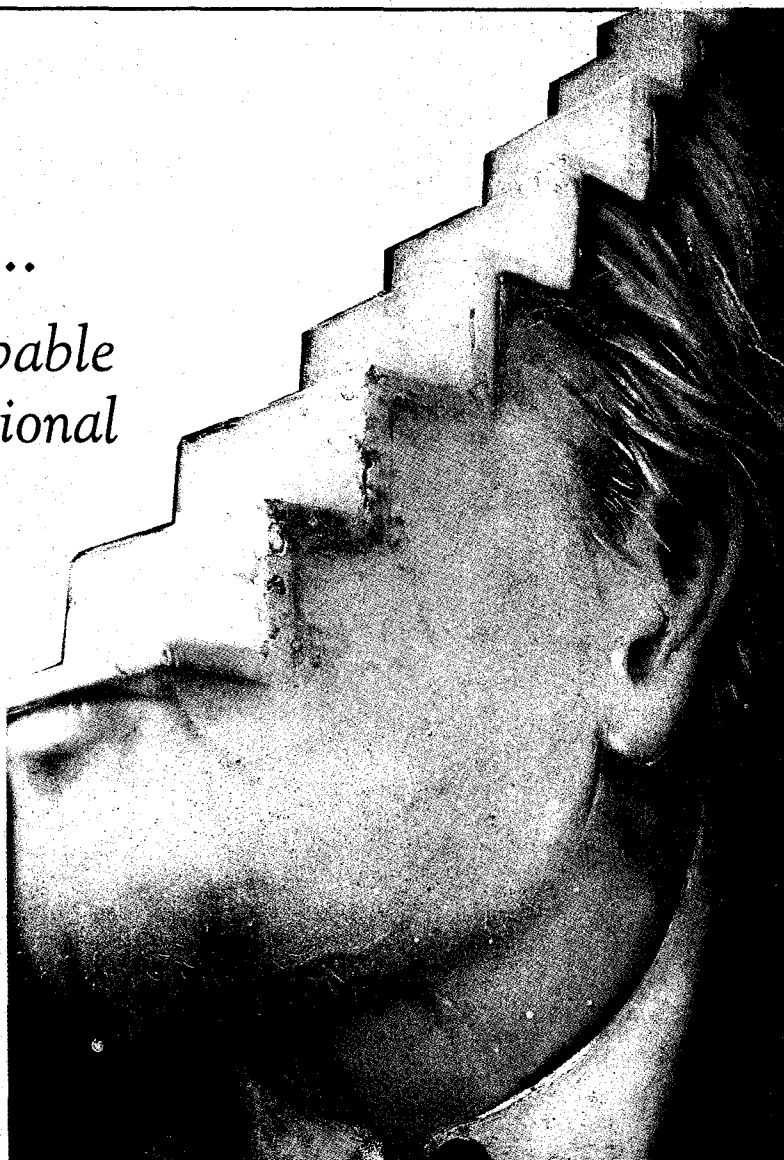
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